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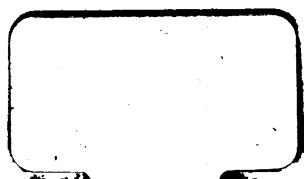
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**THE SOOTHSAYER BALAAM**

*Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the firstfruits  
of His increase : all that devour him shall offend ;  
evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord.*

**JEREMIAH ii. 3.**

# THE SOOTHSAYER BALAAM

or

The Transformation of a Sorcerer  
into a Prophet

NUMBERS XXII.-XXV.

By

THE VERY REV. SERAPHIM

BISHOP OF OSTROJSK

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1900

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## PREFACE

THE aim of the present work is to give, to the best of our abilities, a satisfactory explanation of a small portion of the Holy Scriptures, taken from chapters xxii.-xxv. of the Book of Numbers. The substance and importance of the events described in these chapters, and the characters of the persons who play a prominent part in the narrative, form a problem, the solution of which is both difficult and interesting.<sup>1</sup> The personality of Balaam himself, and the question of the authenticity of his parables, constitute the scientific problem of the narrative. The character of the Mesopotamian Soothsayer Balaam, to whose counsel the Moabites had recourse, his policy and his particular magical capacities, are equally interesting both from a moral and a psychological point of view. His prophecies serve, by their form and contents, as one of the most convincing proofs of the authenticity of the Pentateuch, an opinion which has been corroborated by the most trustworthy theologians. Nevertheless, it was only in modern times (about the middle of the seventeenth century) that the attention of Bible students was attracted by the history of Balaam and the contents of his prophecies; for it was then that the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures was first founded on a historical and philological basis, a form of study until then unknown. It happened at the same period that some of the Protestant religious communities became imbued with a spirit of denial as to the authenticity of some of the narratives of the Bible. However, all scientific researches, whether affirmative or negative, concerning this portion of the Book

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<sup>1</sup> See De Geer, *Dissertatio de Bileamo*, Preface.

of Numbers could never have been considered either quite complete or thoroughly trustworthy, until the seventies of the present century, when the wonderful discoveries made amongst the forgotten ashes of the ancient nations of the East were revealed. Thanks to the light thus shed, our horizon of view upon questions touching the historical side of the Holy Scriptures has been considerably enlarged; the call of the Moabites upon Balaam, beseeching him to curse the people of Israel that they might be smitten and driven from the land of Moab (Num. xxii. 6-11), has become quite comprehensible; and some of the formerly obscure historical points in the prophecies of Balaam appear in their true signification.

We have thus given a sufficient clue as to the method of investigation that we have pursued. Although our mode of proceeding may disagree with the general opinion, to the effect that criticism and scepticism are the characteristic marks of a scientific commentary, and that the best result obtainable in the way of expressing an opinion is one which signifies neither yes nor no, we have tried to find a *positive solution* to the different questions by a thorough and careful examination of both Biblical and secular authorities. However, the solution of every thesis is attainable in two ways—by direct and by indirect proofs. In cases where the subject under discussion concerns the correctness of certain points of view already entirely established by the Church, that is, by her Œcumenical decrees, the author has only had before him the easy task of proving the error, or impiety, of a contrary point of view; but it is far more difficult to give a definite answer to some special theological question, which until now has never been positively explained, and when, moreover, there is no Œcumenical decree to refer to. It is easy to be led away by secondary considerations in the solution of such questions, that is to say, to take up the criticism of numerous one-sided learned opinions (interesting to no one), and to

neglect the examination of that thesis which may prove the most probable. This is why we have found it more expedient to leave polemics aside, and to refrain from refuting the antiquated and forgotten opinions of the scientific Biblical pedants of Western Europe. We have therefore done our best to explain every fundamental and special proposition of the problem to be solved, so that every question should have a *positive answer* and serve at the same time as a *silent refutation* to any divergent views. This is also why we have found it expedient to leave the text free of too much critical analysis, and have only touched upon the scientific opinions concerning, so to say, the fundamental questions of our subject; secondary questions having been either passed over in silence, or mentioned in separate notes printed in italics.

And now we have still to ask the question, Has anything new been said upon our subject in our work, and to what results have we attained?

In the main, the whole subject is an ancient one, and one which has been already decided. The personality of Balaam and the signification of his prophetic parables have been defined long ago in accordance with the universally accepted teaching of the Holy Orthodox Church. The novelty of the present work consists in the scientific justification and explanation of the narrative contained in Num. xxii.-xxv. These explanations are important in view of the objections and perplexities which have been raised upon the subject by Protestant theologians, and have also been suggested from time to time by secular students of the Bible. A considerable amount of works (mostly foreign) have had to be examined in order to obtain a clear insight into the facts of Balaam's history, and to realise the character and inner signification of those facts, as well as the true meaning of Balaam's prophetic parables.

The principal works which have been consulted are the following:—

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- The quotations from the Psalms of David and other passages of the Holy Scriptures are taken from the Bible in the Russian translation (of the Holy Synod) of 1876.

We have not been able to give many quotations from the works of the Holy Fathers and teachers of the Church in this book, because, for some reason unknown to us, this part of the Bible has either been altogether passed over by them, or merely noticed briefly. In spite of this, everything that has been said upon the subject by the holy teachers of the universe has been quoted in this volume;—our method of explaining those passages, which appear short and incomplete in the original text, having been copied from the system adopted by St. John Chrysostom in his *Discourses upon Genesis*.

## NOTE

THE publication of the English edition of my work was nearly completed when I was made acquainted by the kindness of an obliging friend with a monograph on Balaam by M. M. Kalisch, Ph.D., M.A., published in London in 1877 under the title of *Bible Studies, Part I., The Prophecies of Balaam (Numbers xxii. to xxiv.), or, The Hebrew and the Heathen*. After a careful perusal of this work, I have, however, come to the conclusion that I have no reason to regret that this source of information was not at hand whilst I was writing my work.

The fundamental arguments upon which the book of Kalisch is built have, on the whole, a great resemblance to the illusionary rationalism of the negatively rational and critical theological school of Tübingen. His arguments concerning the principal questions contained in the Book of Numbers, chapters xxii.-xxiv., are a repetition of the opinions promulgated by the well-known Bible scholars, De Wette, Knobel, Ewald, and Oort, and the signification and importance of those opinions have been duly noticed and commented upon in my work. Except that we find that the author has given too broad a margin to the fantastical assurances of the Rabbinical and Talmudist literature, and has allotted insufficient space to the different data contained in the Eastern Archæology, particularly that of Egypt and Assyria (see Lenormant, Fr., *Die Magie und Wahrsagekunst der Chaldäer, autorisirte vom Verfasser bedeutend verbesserte und vermehrte deutsche Ausgabe*, Jena, 1878; Brugsch, *Egypt, History of the Pharaohs*), which may contribute to the elucidation of the episode in question. Therefore the book of Kalisch affords us no new source of information more ample than what has already been said upon the subject in the monograph of Oort,

which appeared in 1860 under the title of Oort, H., *Disputatio de Pericope Num. xxii. 2-xxiv., Historiam Bileami Continente*, Lugd. Batav., 1860, and cannot aspire to any prominent position in theological scientific literature.

SERAPHIM, BISHOP OF OSTROJSK,  
*Kremieniec, Government of Volhynia,*  
*Russia, October 1900.*

## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THIS monograph on the Soothsayer Balaam was written by the Very Reverend Seraphim, Bishop of Ostrojsk, Vicar of the Archbishop of Volhynia, as a thesis for the degree of Bachelor of Theology, which was conferred upon him by the Theological Academy of St. Petersburg, and ratified by the Holy Synod in the course of the past year. It aroused a certain amount of interest amongst the intellectual public in Russia; so that even a widespread political newspaper, the *Novoe Vremya*, made favourable mention of its appearance, although works written by clerical authors are rarely noticed in journals devoted to worldly matters.

The following is a quotation from the review of Bishop Seraphim's book, which appeared in the weekly supplement of the *Novoe Vremya* of June  $\frac{1}{2}$  1899, No. 8386:—

'Bishop Seraphim's book (comprising 336 pages) treats of four chapters of the Bible, which contain an episode from the life of the Mesopotamian Soothsayer Balaam, who had been called to curse the people of Israel, and whose curse turned into a prophetic blessing. The work is rich in archæological, philological, and partly psychological materials. The lover of the East will find therein pleasant pastures through which he can saunter with delight, and in which he can find both philosophical and spiritual refreshment. Bishop Seraphim's book is an excellent continuation of Bishop Chrysanthus's work upon the religions of the ancient world, and that of Mr. George Vlastov, writer of the *Sacred Chronicles of Nations*. May this book serve as an incentive to new archæological works of the same character!'

An equally favourable notice was given in another daily political newspaper, *The Caucasus*, which appears in Tiflis; and Mr. Velitchko, its talented editor and poet, has also testified to the value of the work of Bishop Seraphim, who is well known in the town of Tiflis, where he spent several years before his consecration as a bishop, occupying the very responsible post of Rector of the Orthodox Theological Seminary there. Here is a short extract from Mr. Velitchko's article, which appeared in No. 299 of *The Caucasus*, Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1899:—

'One has only to glance at this book to see how much labour, how much minute and careful study, has been expended by the author in order to collect the geographical and historical data relative to nations, towns, and localities, and to give all the philological shades of meaning contained in the numerous notes, which testify to the great erudition of the author and to his thorough acquaintance with the Hebrew language. We need not go into detail as regards the appreciation with which the work has been received in clerical circles, since the degree of Bachelor of Theology, which the book won for its author, is the best proof of its intrinsic value. It has been mentioned by the press as a work, not exclusively theological, but containing many facts interesting to a layman.' Here follow quotations from the different parts of the book of most interest; and the editor concludes by saying that he has endeavoured in his short notice to show that the work will be interesting to every well-informed reader, and that even the enlightened Hebrew may be attracted by the broad and benevolent spirit which characterises the author as a true representative of Russian Orthodoxy. The editor of *The Caucasus* hopes that this book, written by an author so well known and highly esteemed in Tiflis, will attract general attention, and be welcomed as a valuable addition to existing literature.

Many works of eminent foreign theologians, and particularly

those of Dean Farrar, have acquired through translation into the Russian language a well-deserved popularity in our country; and some of Bishop Seraphim's friends have obtained permission to translate his work into English, trusting that it may also in its turn be received with interest by the English-speaking nation.

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# THE SOOTHSAYER BALAAM

## CHAPTER I

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### THE DETERMINATION OF BALAK

*Numbers xxii. 1-7.*

§ 1. THE appearance of the Soothsayer Balaam in the pages of Sacred History was the result, as is the case with every historical event, of special precedents and circumstances in the history of the people of Israel; and, although these circumstances must be well known to every student of the Old Testament, still we do not think it superfluous to give a short summary of the causes which led to the arrival of Balaam from Mesopotamia at the borders of the land of Moab. For these events are very closely connected with the history of Balaam, and it would be difficult to rightly judge of its substance and importance if they were not duly taken into consideration.

The circumstances were as follows:—

In the fortieth year after the departure from Egypt (cf. Num. xiv. 33; Deut. i. 3, 4, ii. 7-9, 14, 18, 19; Num. xx. 14-xxi.), by the commandment of the Lord, the people of Israel drew near to the southern borders of Canaan, with the intention of taking possession of the land promised to them by God, and of settling there (Gen. xv. 16-21, xvii. 8). Having bent round the south side of the range of mountains of Seir, the children of Israel advanced in a broad and long column (caravan) along the eastern borders of the land of Edom and Moab (Judg. xi. 18), moving on towards the north of

the Arabian wilderness. There they crossed the source of the river Arnon, and in the seventh month of the year<sup>1</sup> above mentioned entered the territory of the kingdom of the Amorites, which was situated to the north of the Arnon in the land beyond Jordan, within the limits of the land promised to the chosen people. After the fruitless negotiations of the Israelite messengers with Sihon, king of the Amorites, who would not suffer Israel to pass through his border, a battle was fought between the Israelites and the Amorites near the town of Jahaz, and 'the Lord God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they smote them: so Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country. And they possessed all the coasts of the Amorites, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and from the wilderness even unto Jordan' (Num. xxi. 21-24; Judg. xi. 21, 22). The countries adjoining the land of the

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<sup>1</sup> The fact that the conquest of the kingdoms of the Amorites and Bashan took place in the seventh month of the fortieth year after the departure from Egypt is corroborated by the following data:—Moses died in the last month of the fortieth (holy) year after the departure from Egypt, therefore approximately at the end of February. The solemn repetition of the commandments was pronounced by Moses in the eleventh month, and began on the first day of the month, that is to say, by our chronology, in the beginning of the month of January. A lapse of one month and a half may have been taken up by the different events narrated in Num. xxv., xxvi., and xxxi. namely—the whoredom of the Israelites with the daughters of Moab, the plague, the second numbering of the Israelites, and the war against the Midianites. Another month and a half may have also elapsed whilst the messengers of Balak travelled twice to Mesopotamia to call Balaam (Num. xxii., xxiv.). Taking these three months away from the month of January brings us back to the end of September or the beginning of October; but supposing, which is also probable, that the events described in Num. xxv., xxvi., and xxxi. occurred in less than a month's time, we should have to subtract only two months and a half from the new moon in January. This would make the Israelites set up their camp in the plains of Moab in the beginning of the eighth month of the fortieth year, that is to say, by our mode of reckoning, in the beginning of October; but as the conquest of the kingdoms of the Amorites and Bashan preceded the encampment in the plains of Moab, the former event has to be carried back to the seventh month of the fortieth year (see Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, vol. iii., Book of Numbers, pp. 4, 5; and note to chapter xxii. of the Book of Numbers, vol. i. of Archimandrite Jerome's *Biblical Archaeology*, p. 235).

Amorites—Jaazer and Bashan (Num. xxi. 32-35)—were subjected to the same fate. The safety of the Israelites was insured by these conquests both in the rear (to the east) and on their right flank (to the north). They set up their camp on the eastern slope of the mountain chain of Pisgah<sup>1</sup> and then passed round the ridge of those mountains and entered on the plain lying at the foot of the mountains of

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<sup>1</sup> Beyond doubt, separate detachments of warriors only, and not the whole people, took part in the war with Jaazer and Bashan. In Josh. iii. 1 and iv. 1 mention is made of the fact that all the people of Israel were 'clean passed over Jordan' to attack the land of Canaan; but, from Num. xxxii. 16-18 and Deut. iii. 18-20, it appears that the wives and children of the Reubenites and Gadites and half the tribe of Manasseh remained under the protection of a certain number of armed men to guard them and all their possessions in some of the cities of the Amorites and Bashan. It is evident from what is said by Joshua (Josh. iii. 17, iv. 1, x. 29, 31, 38, 43) that he speaks of the people in a general sense without going into details. We may say the same of the present case. If it was found useless by the elders to take over the whole camp to the other side of Jordan, there was still less reason for the whole people to take part in the struggle against the Amorites and the inhabitants of Jaazer and Bashan. In the list of the camps given in Num. xxi. and xxxiii., there is not one camp mentioned as having been pitched in the land of Bashan. Meanwhile, if all the people with their wives, children, and cattle had marched against Og, king of Bashan, they must have halted on their way in different quarters during such a long campaign. On the other hand, it is said in Num. xxxiii. 41-47 that the Israelites encamped only in such towns, Iim, Ije-abarim, Dibon-Gad, and others, as were situated between the Arnon and the Jabbok in the land of the Amorites, and it is further said (Num. xxi. 25, 31) that Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites before the conquest of Jaazer and Bashan. Finally, the holy writer of the Pentateuch states (Num. xxxiii. 47, 48) that, before encamping in the plains of Moab, the Israelites pitched their tents in the mountains of Abarim before Nebo to the west of Heshbon, the capital of the Amorites. It is probable that the Israelites' camp was on the eastern slope of those mountains under cover of a part of the army; or, may be, guarded by the youths and old men who had not gone to war (Num. i.). The tents, cattle, and property probably remained in the care of the women and children, whilst the warriors of Israel fought against Sihon, king of the Amorites. After the defeat of the latter, some of the Israelite families moved little by little to the cities of the Amorites, whilst part of the camp remained at the foot of the Amorite mountains as a rearguard against attacks from the wilderness. It is to be supposed that this was the spot where Moses remained, and from which orders were issued to attack Jaazer and Bashan (see Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, vol. iii. note 1 to the twenty-second chapter of the Book of Numbers).

Abarim to the west against Beth-peor (Deut. iv. 46). This took place in the eighth month of the fortieth year, that is to say, in our month of October (or November). This plain, situated next to the eastern bank of the Jordan,<sup>1</sup> opposite the town of Jericho, was divided into several parts by small promontories and rivulets, known long ago under the name of the plains of Moab<sup>2</sup> (Num. xxii. 1). The

<sup>1</sup> The Slavo-Greek expression 'near the Jordan' (παρὰ τὸν Ἰορδάνην) corresponds to the Hebrew מַעְבֵּר לַיַּרְדֵּן, which, in the translation of the Septuagint, is rendered in other places by the expression 'on yonder side,' i.e. the opposite side of Jordan (see Num. xxxii. 19, xxxiv. 15). For the holy writer of the Pentateuch himself, who at the time of writing dwelt in the country to the east of Jordan, in those very plains of Moab, it must have been *this side* and not *yonder side*; but this discordance between the author's personal relation to the locality and his definition in words is in reality not the striking contradiction which some scientific critics have tried to make out, and which has even been put forward as an argument against the authenticity of the Pentateuch (Knobel and others). The expressions '*this side*' and '*yonder side*' may be used in a double sense—either subjectively from the personal point of view of the writer or speaker, or objectively as a geographical definition. In the present case the sacred historian has used the expression מַעְבֵּר, 'on yonder side,' evidently from the objective point of view, inherited traditionally by his tribesmen from their ancestors. It is known that the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived in the land of Canaan, and that the descendants of Jacob inhabited the land of Egypt. From the point of view of these countries, the lands to the east of Jordan must have always appeared '*yonder side Jordan*.' This expression מַעְבֵּר must have become technical at the time of the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, and may have remained such even when the people of Israel found themselves to the east of Jordan. This is quite probable, if we take into consideration the fact that other nations use similar geographical definitions. The Romans had a Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul, and the Russians call the left bank of the Volga and the country to the east of this river '*yon side the Volga*,' and the expressions '*yon side the Bug*,' or '*yon side the river Moskva*,' are frequently used in the same sense by the Russians. These terms do not change for those whose homes are in the opposite direction—Cisalpine Gaul, or '*yonder side the Volga*,' keeping their names as a geographical definition, equally intelligible to those who live *this side* or *yon side*.

<sup>2</sup> In the Slavonian edition of the Bible we find in Num. xxii. 1 the expression ΟΠΟΛΥΨΗΑCΑ ΗΔ ΖΑΠΑΔ'Ε (set up arms to the wests), which is not exactly in accordance with the Greek text in the translation of the Septuagint, παρενέβαλον ἐπὶ δυσμῶν. The word παρεμβάλλω means, in strict correspondence to the Hebrew word הִנָּח, 'to be inclined,' 'to be



Israelites pitched their camp, with all their tents, property, and cattle (Num. xxii. 1, xxxiii. 48, 49), in these plains,

stationed,' 'to have a dwelling somewhere' (see *Russian-Hebrew Dictionary*, Steinberg, and Chr. Stockii *Clav. Linguae Sanctae*, 1827); but it may also be used in a special sense, and signify 'to be drawn up in battle-order,' 'to pitch a camp' = *στρατοπεδεύω*. In the passage under comment, there can be no doubt as to the suitability of the latter signification of the word *παρεμβάλλω*, for the reason that the complement to the word *παρεμβάλλω*, *δυσμά* (wests), is expressed by means of *ἐπὶ* in the genitive case, and the prefix *ἐπὶ* with the genitive case always indicates the locality of the object or action in answer to the question where. Therefore the words *παρενέβαλον ἐπὶ δυσμῶν* mean 'pitched a camp to the wests' (more correctly, westwards). It is true that, instead of the generally adopted *ἐπὶ δυσμῶν* equivalent to the Hebrew *בְּעֶרְבוֹת*, we find in some preserved fragments of Origen's *Hexapla* that mention is made of other versions of the most ancient translations, such as *πρὸς ὁμαλὰ* (Aquila), or *ἐπὶ τὴν πεδίαδα* (translation of Symmachus), or *ἐπὶ δυμάς*, in Theodotion and other transcripts of the Septuagint (see *Hexaplorum Origen. fragmenta quae supers. in Lamb. Bos.*). But this difference may be due to a very easy confusion of the two Hebrew letters *ב* and *ל*. As to the Slavonic expression 'to the wests,' it may have proceeded from a slip of the pen of the copyists; for in Num. xxxiii. 48 the Greek text *παρενέβαλον ἐπὶ δυσμῶν* is correctly translated in the Slavonic text as *ополчѣшася на зѣпады* (take up arms westwards). In the meantime the words corresponding to the Hebrew *יַחֲנֶה בְּעֶרְבוֹת* have in latter years been translated both in the Russian edition of the Bible and in all Western translations by the words 'and pitched in the plains.' The accuracy and the suitability of this translation is beyond question. (a) The Hebrew word *עֶרְבוֹת* has, in fact, been translated, according to the *Hexapla* of Origen, in the most ancient translations of the Vulgate by Aquila and Symmachus by the word 'plain'; (b) the form *עֶרְבוֹת*, proceeding from *עֶרְבָה*, which indicates the whole valley of the Jordan from the Galilean Sea to the Ælanitic Gulf (see Hengstenberg, *Geschichte Bileamus Geograf.*, p. 230), and includes in its integral parts *עֶרְבוֹת מוֹאָב*, is evidently not used with the intention of indicating the plural number, but with that of conveying a general collective idea, without contrasting it with the singular number (Gesen., *Hebrew Grammar*, § 108), yet so as to express the combination of the different parts of the plain, *עֶרְבָה*, according to their different geological properties; (c) the Septuagint evidently connected *עֶרְבוֹת* with *עֶרֶב*, which means 'evening,' 'setting of the sun,' and included in the word *עֶרְבוֹת* not only 'the west,' 'the western country,' but also, and principally, the 'western plains.' Different facts lead us to this conclusion. Amongst others, we read in the Book of Joshua of a smooth low plain to the east, *πρὸς ἡλίου ἀνατολὰς*, of Jericho, opposite *עֶרְבוֹת מוֹאָב*, which is called in chapter v. 10, *עֶרְבוֹת יִרְיָהוּ*. This is translated by the Septuagint *ἐπὶ*

between Beth-jesimoth and Abel-shittim from north to south,<sup>1</sup> and tarried there for a space of about three months before crossing the Jordan. It is highly probable that the events under comment, related in Num. xxii.—xxv., occurred at the same time as those described in chapters xxvi. and xxxiii. of the same book, which took place as follows:—

When the Israelites pitched their camp in the plains of Moab near Jericho, they were separated by the river Jordan

*δυσμῶν Ἰερικῶ*, and is evidently taken not in a direct but in a metonymical sense, that is to say, it is meant to express not the west, but an even, low (and sandy) country. Nor is this accidental. The patriarch Abraham, the forefather of the people of Israel, and the first representative of the Hebrew language, grew up in Ur of the Chaldees facing the western, sandy, and partly hilly plains of the Syrian upland (North Arabia). The further development of the Hebrew language, the education of the holy writer of the Pentateuch himself, and of the seventy translators into Greek of the Pentateuch, took place in Egypt, which also lay to the west upon the boundless sandy desert of the Sahara. This circumstance may have contributed to impress upon Abraham and his descendants the idea that the west was inevitably connected with a sandy, hilly plain. On the other hand, the translators not only knew of the metonymical signification of the Hebrew word *ערבות*, but in the Greek word, *δυσμα*, evidently referred to western (sandy) plains. The translators of the Slavonic Bible may have easily lost sight of this circumstance, and taken the word *δυσμα* in the usual sense of the word 'west,' particularly in view of the fact that the *δυσμα* *Μωάβ* formed the western part of the land of Moab shortly before the entrance of the Israelites into the promised land (Num. xxi. 26-30).

<sup>1</sup> This place was chosen as the last halt before the passage of the Jordan, because, at half an hour's distance from the Wady Heshbon, were situated the most convenient places for the passage of the people across the Jordan, the so-called fords (see Josh. ii. 7; Judg. iii. 28). The plains of Moab between Beth-jesimoth and Abel-shittim formed the western part of the vast valley of the Jordan (actually El Ghôr), which, before it had fallen under the domination of Sihon, king of the Amorites, belonged to the people of Moab, and probably extended from the Dead Sea to the source of the river Jabbok. The situation of the Israelites' camp was therefore defined as 'yonder side Jordan, near Jericho.' This place is frequently mentioned in Numbers (xxvi. 3, 63, xxxi. 12, xxxiii. 48-50, xxxv. 1, xxxvi. 13). It extended from Beth-jesimoth to Abel-shittim (Num. xxxiii. 49)—Beth-jesimoth literally meaning 'the house of the wilderness.' It is situated on the desert coast of the Dead Sea to the north-east (Num. xxi. 20), and, in the Onomastikon, under the word *Βηθαισιμῶθ*, is said to be situated near the Dead Sea at a distance of ten Roman miles, that is, four hours' walk from the town of Jericho to the south (south-east). According to the testimony

alone from the land of Canaan; but the conquest of the country yonder side of Jordan had arrested for a time the movements of the principal camp, and delayed the longed-for passage of the Jordan. Different measures were necessary to retain the possession of the conquered land. Fortresses had to be built and garrisons provided, so as to prevent the conquered nations from making any attempt to recover their lost possessions. It must be concluded from the testimony of the Scriptures (see Num. xxi. 24, 26; Josh. xii. 2; Deut. ii. 18-21) that the land extending from the river Arnon to

of Josephus (*Bell. Jud.* iv. 5, 6), it lay to the south of Julia Livia; that is to say, Beth-Haran, on the north shore of the Wady Heshbon. In the opinion of Ewald (*Götting. Gel. Anz.*, 1866, p. 17), it stood on the site of the ruins of Suaine, described by F. de Saulcy in his *Voyage en Terre Sainte* (Paris, 1865, i. p. 315). Abel-shittim, literally, 'the field of acacias,' or simply Shittim (Num. xxv. 1), was situated, according to Josephus (*Antiq.* iv. 8), on the site occupied at a later period by the town of Abila (Ἀβιλά), in a country rich with date-palms, at sixty stadia from Jordan, probably in the neighbourhood of the Wady Eshta, to the north of the Wady Heshbon (Keil und Del., *Comment. üb. d. Büch. Mos.*, p. 310). Some biblicists are of the opinion that this spot is well defined by the situation of Nimrah (mentioned in Num. xxxii. 3). The old names, very slightly altered, are kept up to this day in the villages of Nimrun, Er-Rame, Beth-Haran, and Abel-shittim (field of acacias). They are nearly the same as the names mentioned in the Holy Scriptures (Num. xxxii. 36; Josh. ii. 1, iii. 1, xiii. 27). Travellers who have visited these historical places describe this strip of land as a luxuriant oasis (see Seetzen, ii. pp. 364, 373; Burckhardt, *Syrien*, pp. 323, 622; Knobel, *Kurzgef. Exeg. Handb.* L. xiii.; Num. xxii. 1, p. 120; Tristram, *Land of Israel*, p. 528 *et seq.*; Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, iii. Num. xxii. note 1, edit. 1878). It was probably occupied by the Israelites, is situated on an expanse of about seven miles' breadth, and forms an elevated plain above the channel of the river Jordan. It is watered by rivulets flowing into the Jordan from the mountains of Abarim. Its rich vegetation and balmy groves cover the valleys of this portion of land, which is intersected by low hills; but on approaching the Dead Sea, the landscape changes, the country becomes stony and barren, and the soil produces nothing but salt and bitter herbage, which provides fodder for camels. This part of the country bears a general resemblance to the great African desert, the sandy Sahara. From this elevated plain the eye could survey the whole district of Jericho, the fertile valleys of Canaan, and the range of mountains to the east and south-east, belonging to the lands of Moab, Beth-Fegor, Bamoth-Baal, etc. The camp of the Israelites extended probably from Beth-jesimoth to Abel-shittim. The tents, containing valuable property, were ranged round the tabernacle, and the herds grazed in the open meadows, or in enclosures forming stables.

the river Jabbok, recently conquered by the Israelites from the Amorites, was at first in the possession of the sons of Lot; that is, of the Ammonites and Moabites (Deut. ii. 18-21). After a time the Ammonites were attacked by Sihon, king of the Amorites, and driven away to the north-east beyond the river Jabbok (Deut. iii. 17; Josh. xii. 2); while the Moabites had to retreat to the south beyond the river Arnon (Num. xxi. 13, 24-26), so that the extermination of the Amorites and the conquest of their land resulted in reality in the appropriation of territory which had at first belonged to the Ammonites and Moabites. It is therefore natural to suppose that those nations were by no means reconciled to the loss of their land, and still retained a desire to recover it. It would be a mistake to admit otherwise, and to maintain, as do some authors (Oort), that the Moabites were friendly in their feelings towards the Israelites. This would be quite incompatible with the rapacious and heathenish tendencies of the Moabites (see Judg. xi. 17) and Ammonites, and with the subjection of the Israelites very soon afterwards in the time of the Judges (Judg. iii. 12-30, x. 7, xi. 33).

Neither could any more friendly feelings be expected on the part of the Midianites, a nomad tribe given to plunder, which roved about the country situated to the east of the lands belonging to the sons of Lot (Judg. vi. 1-6). Such a state of affairs was a powerful stimulus to these nations to search for some means or other to free themselves from their dangerous neighbours, and their reasons for fearing the Israelites were more important than appears at first sight. The above-mentioned victories of the sons of Israel in the struggle with the Amorites, and the total extermination of all the population in the kingdoms of Sihon and Og (Num. xxi. 24-35; Deut. ii. 33-35, iii. 37), were the cause of great anxiety to the tribes, settled on the eastern banks of the Jordan and the Dead Sea. They had themselves suffered

from the horrors of war, and knew the awful consequences of defeat—imprisonment, slavery, torture, every possible humiliation. In the course of every twenty or thirty years the plains and mountains of these nations were devastated either by the wild horsemen of the eastern nomad tribes, or by the terrible armies and chariots of the Pharaohs of the eighteenth dynasty, who overran the land of Canaan (see Isa. viii. 7, 8) like a mighty river in full flood, searching out every corner, and carrying away as its prey the inhabitants of the valley of Jordan as prisoners and their possessions. The Egyptian monuments testify that, about a century before the entrance of the Israelites into the land of Canaan, the Pharaohs of the nineteenth dynasty, Sethi I. and his son Rameses the Great, had several times passed with their armies through Canaan on their way to Northern Mesopotamia to war with the people of Ruten and Chita, who ruled at that time in anterior or front<sup>1</sup> Asia, and at whose instigation the small tribes of Canaan used to attack the neighbouring rich and fertile Egyptian provinces which bordered upon their country.<sup>2</sup>

The Canaanites and their eastern neighbours, the Arabian nomad tribes, such as Shassu and others, very often acted as skirmishers for the powerful Syrian and Mesopotamian tribes in their contests with Egypt, and of course they often

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<sup>1</sup> *Translator's note* :—The expression 'front Asia' is used by the historian Schlosser, who wrote a great German universal history, which was much thought of in Russia a few years ago, to describe that portion of Asia which comprises Armenia and Mesopotamia and the countries lying to the west thereof.

<sup>2</sup> We read in the learned work of the celebrated Egyptian scholar Brugsch, *Egypt and the History of the Pharaohs*, p. 283, that 'Tothmes I., having brilliantly concluded his expedition against Nubia and Koush and secured his southern frontiers, returned to Egypt with a rich booty, and decided to lead his victorious army to the east and attack in their own country the hateful indigenous tribes of anterior Asia, who held the Egyptians in subjection. This war of revenge against Asia, begun by Tothmes I., lasted nearly five centuries after him, with unvarying success on the Egyptians' side' (pp. 334-340).

had to pay the penalty of their predatory actions. The destruction of the tribe of Shassu by the army of Sethi I. is described in the following words in an inscription on one of the Egyptian monuments: 'The King was roused against them like a raging lion. They were turned into a heap of corpses in their mountainous country. They lay there bathed in their blood. Not a single one escaped his hands (literally, his fingers), in order to acquaint the distant nations with his power.'<sup>1</sup> The Pharaohs experienced a particular pleasure in slaughtering vanquished nations and those who had rebelled against them, and in general in getting rid of their adversaries. The inscription, commemorating the war of Sethi against the people of Palestine and Syria, is written in the following terms: 'His (Pharaoh's) heart finds its pleasure only in floods of blood, when he cuts off the heads of his enemies. The moment when he fights against men is dearer to him than a day of delights. He hews down his enemies at once, and does not spare any amongst them. And if any one remains alive, he keeps him in his hands and takes him away as a captive to Egypt.'<sup>2</sup> The narrative of the expedition of Pharaoh through Canaan to Syria, which begins with the words, 'The ascent of Pharaoh to seize the land of Kadesh in the country of the Amorites,' relates that all the inhabitants fled from Kadesh before the arrival of Pharaoh; 'the warriors, who rushed out of the town to the rescue of their country-

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<sup>1</sup> Brugsch, *Egypt and the History of the Pharaohs*, p. 440. The explanatory importance of these considerations would by no means be diminished if it were proved that the Israelites left Egypt in the reign of the eighteenth dynasty at the time of Tothmes II., and that they entered the land of Canaan in the year of the conclusion of the seventeen years' war of Tothmes III. against the people of Mesopotamia and Canaan (see Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, ii. pp. 300-306, notes to the Book of Exodus, §§ 17, 18). And, on the other hand, fresh evidence cannot be allowed to change opinions established long ago in our orthodox exegesis with regard to the political position of the nations of Syria and Palestine at the time of the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, as these opinions are founded on the direct evidence of the Bible itself.

<sup>2</sup> Brugsch, p. 441.

men, were pierced by the arrows of Sethi, and fell from their chariots. At the same time, the Egyptian army goes to the attack and takes the town by storm with all its inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> Such events had a striking effect upon the people of Canaan and of the farther side of the Jordan; for, at that time, both the conquerors and the conquered were thoroughly convinced that victories and conquests were the results of a mysterious and insurmountable co-operation of the national gods. The martial and victorious sovereigns of Egypt gave the strictest orders that the inscriptions on their monuments should record, for the benefit of their contemporaries and descendants, that the true author of their victories and successes was the god Ammon<sup>2</sup> (and all the other gods). It was therefore quite

<sup>1</sup> Brugsch, p. 442. The Assyrian conquerors acted in the same manner (see Astaré, *Babylonian and Assyrian Antiquities*, pp. 334-386).

<sup>2</sup> 'The king,' says the inscription, 'brings the spoil to his father Ammon, after having returned from the vile land of Ruten; (it) consists of silver and gold . . . and of all the kings of the people, whom he holds bound in his hand, to fill the storehouses of his father Ammon, for the victory which he gave the king' (*History of the Pharaohs*, p. 446). It is said in another inscription that offerings are brought to the temple of Ammon, 'in consequence of the victories over all the nations, which the god Ammon has given to the king' (p. 447). Similar expressions of faith in the assistance of the god Ammon are frequently met with in the Egyptian annals. The Assyrians, whose influence upon anterior Asia was not less important than that of the Egyptians, held the same views about the conditions of victory. 'One idea passes like a red line through all this long narrative of campaigns, executions, and warlike trophies; this idea throws a light upon facts which appear at first sight incomprehensible, and even revolting.' The Assyrian king acted constantly according to the will of Assurus and other great protecting divinities; he is but the 'executor' of their orders; he is their 'vicar,' their 'servant.' They 'bless his intentions, they help him in wars and battles.' 'Assurus is a great god, he extends his domination over the kings of four countries,' 'he gives him the strength to govern,' 'he commits to his charge the fields and woods, that he should make use of them according to his personal desire and will.' 'It is by the will of Assurus and Bin that the king counts his chariots and his regiments and takes the field.' Assurus and the great gods 'go before him,' striking his enemies with terror. 'With the permission of Assurus,' and other divine protectors, he goes out of the intrenchments, 'obedient to the will of Assurus,' he leaves the town of Tuskhan, passes the Tigris, and attacks the city of the enemy 'with the help of Assurus.' 'By the will of Assurus, who goes before him,' he takes possession of the town. Through the influence of the gods Samas and Bin,

natural that, at the time of the departure of the Israelites from Egypt and of the conquest of Canaan, the name of 'Egypt, or 'the people of Egypt,' caused a panic amongst the tribes of anterior Asia, so that the defeat of the Egyptians, or the diminution of their power in any way, made those who had strength to resist them appear invincible. The manner in which the Israelite spies, sent from Shittim, were received by Rahab, the harlot of Jericho (Josh. ii. 1-16), is a striking testimony of the deep impression produced upon the inhabitants of the valley of Jordan by the rumour of the wonderful passage of the Israelites across the Red Sea, and by the recent defeat of the Amorite kings. She involuntarily acknowledged this, saying: *'I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath'* (Josh. ii. 9-11).

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his protectors, he takes the land of Nairi and spreads over the adjoining lands 'like Bin, god of inundations; Assurus extends his possessions, and intrusts to his sword the manifestation of his (Assurus's) power.' That military success was dependent on the will of the gods was also the belief of all the various small tribes of anterior Asia, at that time under the undoubted and irresistible influence of Egypt, and of the kingdoms adjoining the Euphrates. To slaughter all the men, or even the whole population of a conquered town, was the usual rule of war at that period. 'I made war against the town' (of Ataroth in the land of the Gadites), says the Moabite king Mesha on the celebrated Moabite stone, 'and I took it and slaughtered all the men to please Chemosh, the god of the Moabites,' 'and instead of them I established there men from Shiran and Shaharatha, that they should dwell there.' 'I took the town of Nebo (from the Israelites) and slaughtered with my sword all its inhabitants, seven chiefs of tribes . . . women and children, because Chemosh had cursed it.'



After this, it is scarcely to be wondered at, nor can the Bible testimony be considered improbable, that a similar terror of the Israelites' power fell upon the Moabites (Num. xxii. 3),<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Moabites, in Hebrew, מוֹאבִּים מוֹאָב (Gen. xix. 37; Exod. xv. 15; Num. xxi. 13, 20, 26, 29, xxiv. 17, xxv. 1, xxvi. 63), were the descendants of the patriarch Lot by his eldest daughter. They inhabited the mountainous but fertile and beautiful district situated to the east of the Dead Sea, which thus formed their western boundary. To the east they bordered upon the desert, to the south upon the Wady (torrent, ravine) of El-Ahza, and to the north upon the river Arnon. This country forms a part of the present province of Kerek. On the south it bordered upon Idumæa, and to the north upon the land of the Reubenites. It is irrigated from east to west by the rivers El-Ahza, Sared, Arnon, and others, which fertilised its plains and valleys, so that fields of corn, vineyards, and the rearing of flocks afforded the inhabitants most profitable employment (Ruth i. 1; 2 Kings iii. 4; Isa. xvi. 1, 8-10). The form of government was very simple. The king stood at the head of his people and governed with a council of elders (Num. xxii. 4; Judg. iii. 12; 1 Sam. xxii. 3; 2 Kings iii. 4). Although the Moabites and the Israelites stood in blood-relationship to each other, and the former spoke a dialect very similar to the language of the Israelites, the Moabites' religion was nearer to that of the Canaanites and Chaldeans. They worshipped deified forms of human passions, such as murder and fornication, under the names of Chemosh and Baal-peor. According to their creed, Chemosh was the author of all their victories and defeats, of all the good and evil which happened to them. Under the name of Baal or Moloch he was considered the supreme punishing director of the world, and was worshipped as the god of the sun, and all natural phenomena conducive to the welfare of mankind were supposed to emanate from this one principal source. On the warmth of its rays depends the fertility of the ground, and it was even supposed to have an indirect influence on the growth of the population. Chemosh, under the name of Baal-peor, therefore appeared in the eyes of the Moabites as the promoter of nature's fertilising power, and his worship was consecrated by most immoral and dissolute festivities. The women and maidens, under the influence of their elders, gave themselves up to the pleasures of the men and sacrificed their chastity (Num. xxxi. 16, xxv. 1-3). This perverse and diabolical worship was the more abominable and scandalous, as it took place openly with the most shameless cynicism and the filthiest details (Joh. Selden, *de Diis Syriis Sintagm.*, p. 159; Scholz, *Goetzendienst und Zauberverwesen*, pp. 176-182, 436). The Moabites were of a peaceful disposition, and incapable of any heroic efforts for the defence of their country, in all probability the consequence of their sensual and effeminate life in their isolated and fertile country. It must also be remembered that they were not numerous; but during the reign of King Mesha (2 Kings i. 1, iii. 4-27), at a much later period, they showed considerable courage and a warlike spirit (see Soliarsky, *Essay of a Biblical Dictionary*, under the words *Moabites* and *Chemosh*).



On the other hand, they could hardly have known that the Lord, the terrible Jehovah, had forbidden His chosen people to 'distress' the Moabites, or 'contend with them in battle' (Deut. ii. 9, 18, 19). They could not have known, nor have been capable of believing, that, in consequence of this prohibition, the Israelites carefully avoided trespassing on the borders of the Moabite land, and preferred passing through the sandy wilderness (Judg. xi. 17, 18).<sup>1</sup>

A luxurious life in a fertile country, and the neighbourhood

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daughters, into captivity unto Sihon king of the Amorites.' This passage proves that the Amorites were more powerful than the Moabites; therefore their defeat and destruction by the Israelites must have suggested a similar fate to the Moabites, and have appeared to them as a prognostic of their own ruin. A slight collision between them and the Israelites, which is hinted at in Judg. xi. 17, 18, Deut. ii. 29, xxiii. 3, 4, may have taken place during the movement of the latter northwards to the land of the Amorites and the fords of Jordan, and have increased those gloomy forebodings (see De Geer, *Dissertatio de Bileamo*, etc., pp. 4, 5).

<sup>1</sup> See Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, Num. xxi. 11-13, notes 7-9. In the first note we read: 'Having advanced from west to east by the pass of the Wady-el-Ithm, so as to come round the mountains of Edom, the Israelites turned sharply off to the north-east in the direction of the Moabite valleys, following the route now taken by the caravans of pilgrims going from Mecca to Damascus. We read in Num. xxxiii. 41, 42, that, before reaching Obboth, the Israelites had pitched their tents in Zalmonah and Punon. Therefore only the principal route is indicated. It is supposed that Obboth is the place now called El-Ahza, a spot where the caravans halt; the names signifying in both Hebrew and Arabian a ditch, or a hole dug in the earth, which is filled with water oozing from under the ground. The little stream Wady-el-Ahza, which now constitutes the boundary between the districts of Djebal and Kerak, formed probably in ancient times the border between Edom and Moab. After having crossed this stream, the Israelites reached Ije-abarim and entered the wilderness "which is before Moab toward the sun rising," that is to say, they entered the pasture land—the word wilderness being here used in the sense of pasture-land—situated to the east of the land of Moab.'

In the second note we read: 'The stream Arnon bears at present the name of Wady Modjeb in its lower parts, and Seyles-Saide in the upper parts (according to Burckhardt, Seetzen, and Ritter). It is a very rapid torrent which falls into the Dead Sea. The Israelites, passing by the "wilderness" (that is to say, by the plain), had to cross this torrent in its upper part; in the thirteenth verse of the above-mentioned chapter it is said that the Israelites kept out of the territories of the Amorites as well as those of the Moabites, and remained in the plain used as pasturage by all the roving tribes.'

of the Canaanites, had influenced the moral character of the Moabites to such an extent as to make them forget the true God worshipped by their forefather Lot.<sup>1</sup> They had equally lost sight of their kindred with the Israelites, and their unsuccessful conflicts with the neighbouring Idumæans and Amorites about some pasture-land had impressed them with the conviction that in international questions all nations have nothing but their own profit in view, and are ever eager to seize upon others' possessions. So that, when the sons of Israel 'smote the Amorites until there was none left alive,' they could have appeared no better in the eyes of the Moabites than the Amorites who had recently oppressed them (Num. xxi. 26-30), and they could scarcely have any hope of finding mercy at the hands of the Israelites. Moreover, the Moabites knew how far they were outnumbered by the chosen people; so that it was quite natural that they fell into a state of great perplexity and were 'sore afraid.'<sup>2</sup> This distracted state of mind must have become intensified every moment. Impressed by the fate of the Amorites, the Moabites must have lived in daily and hourly fear of an attack by the Israelites, and had certainly made up their mind to defend their rights. They may have even contemplated an attempt to take back the pasture lands, which had once belonged to them, extending between the Arnon, Jordan, and

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<sup>1</sup> We have already mentioned the Moabites' religion and their loathsome forms of worship (see the work of the German scholar Scholz, *Goetzendienst und Zauberwesen*, pp. 173-181).

<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew word פָּנָה, from פָּנָה, corresponding to the word 'afraid,' signifies both in the Hebrew and Arabian languages 'to rush away from fear' (see De Geer, *Dissert. de Bil.*, p. 27); 'to take oneself off from fear' (see Steinberg, *Hebrew-Russian Dictionary*); 'to fall back from fear'; 'to be penetrated with fear' (Fürst, *Hebr. und Chald. Handwört.*). In the Septuagint the word פָּנָה is translated very correctly by the Greek *εφοβέθη*, as *εφοβέσθαι* means precisely 'to run away from fear.' In the present case this agitation was indicated by more frequent communication and councils amongst the Moabites, whose dwelling-places bordered upon the Israelites' camp. The expression פָּנָה conveys a still more intense degree of fear.

Jabbok. In the meantime the Israelites kept to the orders of the Lord 'not to distress Moab' (Deut. ii. 9), and pitched their camps peacefully in the rich Moabite pastures which they had taken from the Amorites, and which were in close vicinity both to the Moabites and Midianites. Such enigmatical behaviour seemed expressly designed to keep the Moabites in suspense, so that they were not only in fear of the people come out from Egypt, but were also filled with impotent rage and painful anxiety.<sup>1</sup>

§ 2. It seems that Balak, king of the Moabites, wishing to put an end to this painful suspense, marched against a group

<sup>1</sup> The fact of the Moabites being in such an agitated state of mind is confirmed by another Hebrew word which, in the original, is  $\text{יָרָא}$ , from the verb  $\text{יָרָא}$ , translated in the Septuagint by the verb  $\text{προσέχθισε}$ . The translation of the word  $\text{יָרָא}$  by the expression 'grew frightened' ( $\text{устрашился}$  in the Russian edition of the Bible, translation of the Holy Synod) is now accepted, although primitively  $\text{יָרָא}$  meant 'to be fastidious,' 'to feel an aversion' (Chr. Stockii *Clav. L. S.*). But as the expression 'to feel an aversion' is considered the correct one by several biblicists (Michaelis in the *Supplem.*, p. 1276, observes *duabus* 11 Gen. xxvii. 46, Num. xxi. 5, *taedii fastidiique notio ita apta, ut verecundia subeat eam negandi*), and as  $\text{יָרָא}$  is joined to the word  $\text{פָּנֵי}$  exactly in the same sense in Gen. xxvii. 46, this signification can only be put aside in isolated cases for some peremptory reason. Besides, the signification 'to be afraid' is not the suitable one either in the present case or in Exod. i. 12. In the Russian text of the Bible the word  $\text{оначаишь}$ , 'were afraid,' is used in the twelfth verse; whilst, in the English, it is said 'they were grieved.' Taking  $\text{יָרָא}$  in the sense of 'to be afraid,' in the present case, would be tautological, and it is the same in the Russian translation. Taken from the point of view of the context, the twelfth verse of the first chapter of Exodus cannot mean that the powerful Egyptians were afraid of the weak Israelites; it would only express their vexation at the failure of the measures taken for the oppression of the Israelites (Hengstenb. *Geschichte Bil.*, p. 32). Neither are the grounds sufficient for translating the word  $\text{יָרָא}$  by 'being grieved,' 'sorrowful,' 'distressed,' as contained in the Syrian and Arabian translations and the cod. Samaritan (Waltoni polyglotta, Num. xxii. 3). As to the Slavonic  $\text{оскорѣѣ}$ , it is an incorrect translation of the Greek word  $\text{προσέχθισε}$  used in the Septuagint which corresponds perfectly with the Hebrew  $\text{יָרָא}$ , and means 'to be angry,' 'to feel a wrathful repulsion.' This meaning coincides with Josephus (*Antiq.* iv. 6, 2, in *magna erat sollicitudine*), and can be more correctly expressed by the words 'they were full of wrathful and painful anxiety.' This same signification of angry aversion is sanctioned by other scholars, e.g. De Geer, *Dissert. de Bil.*, p. 27, and Oort, *Disputatio de Pericope*, xxii. 2-xxiv. pp. 6, 3.

of Israelites with a detachment of warriors, but was repulsed and obliged to return to his own territory.<sup>1</sup> As the Israelites did not pursue him any farther, the painful situation of the Moabites remained unchanged, and they were again forced to search for the means of deliverance from their obnoxious neighbours. But to whom were they to appeal? Their relations, the powerful Ammonites, were far away, and separated from them by the hateful people come out from Egypt (cf. Deut. iii. 18-16). It is natural that, under the pressure of such circumstances, the Moabites in their terror decided at first to implore the help of their nearest neighbours, the Midianites. This tribe seems to have been for a long time in friendly intercourse with the Moabites, partly owing to their common religious faith and customs, possibly also from the necessity of joining their forces together to repel the attacks of other more numerous and powerful tribes.<sup>2</sup>

It was just the time of the year when the approaching winter caused the Midianites to abandon their roving life in the wilderness and return to their villages and fortresses, which were situated in proximity to the Moabites (Num. xxxi.

<sup>1</sup> We find an allusion to this event in Josh. xxiv. 9: '*Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you.*' The word יִלְחָם is translated in the Septuagint by *ῥαπερδάζω*, which means 'to place in battle line,' 'to go into action,' 'to fight.' The context of Judges, chapters x.-xi., is a proof that this does not mean slight skirmishes, but a regular campaign against the Israelites. It is certain that Balak did not begin a regular war, as the Israelites themselves had not yet finally settled in the lands of the Amorites; and in consequence of the above-mentioned circumstances, the Moabites were not powerful enough to conquer the sons of Israel. This is evident from the words in the Book of Joshua, where it is said that, after having warred against Israel, he sent to call Balaam.

<sup>2</sup> According to the testimony of a Hebrew author of the first century after Christ (Josephus, *Antiq.* iv. 6, 2), Balak was an old friend and ally of the Midianites. The Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan, Book of Numbers xxii. 4, even says that the kings were chosen by turns from both nations, and that Balak was a Midianite. Although this testimony requires more trustworthy confirmation, nevertheless the fact of the Moabites' appeal to the Midianites for help is beyond doubt, as is also their joint participation in the painful episode of the whoredom of the Israelites with the daughters of Moab

10, 11). A joint council of Moabite and Midianite elders was probably called together by Balak, king of Moab. Amongst them were certainly the elders or princes, Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba (Josh. xiii. 21): '*And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field*' (Num. xxii. 4). The sacred chronicle does not mention the answer of the Midianites, nor the conclusion of the council. We have reasons to suppose, nevertheless, that, in view of the recent defeat they had sustained in the war with Sihon,<sup>1</sup> king of the Amorites, of their small number and innate cowardice (cf. Num. xxi. 1-12), the Midianites declared themselves against war with the people of Israel; and, having no other means of self-defence to recommend, they apparently advised appealing to the highest magic power.

The Midianites and Moabites may have thought of this means of deliverance from a dangerous neighbour in consequence of some peculiar circumstances of the period. We know by the Egyptian chronicles that the Arabian nomad tribes, and amongst them the Midianites (Gen. xxxvii. 28), were in constant commercial communication with Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

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(Num. xxv.). This leads us to suppose that there did exist some close kind of connection between these two nations, owing to the similarity of their religion and dialect (Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, Book of Numbers xxii. 2-4, note 2). In Josh. xiii. 21, the princes or elders of the Midianites, Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, were called dukes of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who, by the testimony of Num. xxi. 26, fought against the former king of Moab and took away the land of Moab as far as the river Arnon, so that the Moabites and Midianites had already been allies against their common enemy, Sihon, king of the Amorites. It is evident that the Midianites played the more important rôle in the alliance.

<sup>1</sup> We may believe this to have taken place on the testimony of the passage already cited from Josh. xiii. 21: '*And all the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, which reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses smote with the princes of Midian, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, which were dukes of Sihon, dwelling in the country*' (cf. Kurtz, *Geschichte d. A. Bundes*, ii. pp. 457-463).

<sup>2</sup> Corn was brought to Egypt from the land of Moab (see Mover's *Phoenizisches Alterthum*, Bd. iii. ; Brugsch, *Egypt*, p. 341). Brugsch also mentions the commercial transactions between the Midianites and the Egyptians.

It was therefore easy for the Midianites to hear (Exod. xv. 14, 15; Josh. ii. 9-11) of the calamities which had stricken the Egyptians by means of the help rendered to Moses by Jehovah. They had probably heard details of the terrible death of Pharaoh in the waters of the Red Sea, and undoubtedly attributed those wonderful events to the favour shown by Heaven to Moses and his people. The Moabites may have also remembered how the crowd of Sodomites, who had fallen on the house of their forefather Lot, were suddenly smitten with blindness by the strangers (Gen. xix. 11). Hence both tribes had more than sufficient reasons for appealing in the hour of impending danger to the services of some mysterious powers, and to seek a man who could help them in their time of need, as Moses had saved the Israelites from the destroying hand of Pharaoh. Some of the Midianite elders who took part in the council may have named a well-known Mesopotamian sorcerer as a man capable of helping the Moabites out of their difficulties. The proposal seems to have been unanimously considered worthy of attention; and the king of the Moabites, Balak, decided to send messengers to Balaam, the son of Beor, to the Mesopotamian town of Pethor (Deut. xxiii. 4; Num. xxiii. 7) by the Euphrates in the land of the sons of Amu, or 'his people.' Where, then, was this forgotten land of Amu situated?

§ 3. The name of Amu, frequently met with in the chronicles of the Pharaohs of the eighteenth to the thirteenth centuries B.C.,<sup>1</sup> is not mentioned in the Bible, if we do not take as an allusion to it the words of the fifth verse of the 22nd chapter of the Book of Numbers. In the Hebrew original we read the first half of that verse as follows:—*וַיִּשְׁלַח מְלָאכִים אֵל בְּלָעַם בֶּרְבֵּעֹר—פְּתוּרָה אֲשֶׁר עַל הַנָּהָר אֲרָץ בְּנֵי-עַמּוֹ.*

In the Septuagint this phrase is translated literally: *καὶ ἀπέστειλε πρέσβεις πρὸς Βαλαὰμ υἱὸν Βεὼρ φαθουρά, ὃ ἐστὶν*

<sup>1</sup> See Brugsch, *Egypt*, pp. 75, 146, 187, 188, 230, 247, 280, 335, 338, 351, 624, 818.



ἐπὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ γῆς υἱῶν λαοῦ αὐτοῦ; and, in the English edition of the Bible, it is said: 'He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people.' The interpreters of a later period have long since deemed it appropriate to determine the signification of the words פֶּתוֹרָה (Pethor), עָמוֹ (Amo), and הַנָּהָר (river). Under the word חֲנָגָר (ganagar), it is quite correct to understand the river Euphrates. This is the opinion of the Chaldean paraphrasists Onkelos, Pseudo-Jonathan, and others, and is confirmed by a parallel passage in Deut. xxiii. 4, 5. The signification of the words פֶּתוֹרָה and עָמוֹ is until now undetermined. The word פֶּתוֹרָה (Pethor), which is supposed to be the name of a town, has been derived by the translators of the Latin Vulgate and Syrian Peshita from the word פִּתְרֵי in the sense of interpreting dreams, and they have translated it by the word 'hariolus' = sorcerer, fortune-teller. But this signification, applied to the word פֶּתוֹרָה (Pethor), is in the first place less appropriate than the name of the town; and, in the second, it is nowhere to be found used in this sense amongst the many and various names cited in different passages of the Bible to designate magicians and sorcerers (see Soliarsky, *Essay of a Biblical Dictionary*, vol. vii. p. 341, under the word *magians*). The supposition that פֶּתוֹרָה (Pethor) means a town is also confirmed by the parallel passage in Deut. xxiii. 4 (cf. Num. xxii. 5), as well as by the traditional understanding of the Targumists (Onkelos, Pseudo-Jonathan, and others).<sup>1</sup> This town is supposed to have been situated approximately in the land of the sons of עָמוֹ (Amo). This word has been considered of old as composed of the

<sup>1</sup> The word פֶּתוֹר is accepted in this sense by De Geer in the *Dissert. de Bil.* p. 8; Oort, *Disp. de Per.* xxii. 2-xxiv. p. 4; Hengst. *Geschichte Bil.* p. 35; and by all modern investigators. It has also been taken in the same sense by the translators of the Holy Synod of the Bible into Russian. According to the testimony of the historian Eusebius, Pethor was situated in the upper part of Mesopotamia (Φαθουρά ὑπὲρ τὴν Μεσοποταμίαν πόλις; cf. Calm. *Comment. ad Num.* xxii. 5).

Hebrew word עַם ('people') and הוּ ('his'); literally, 'people his.' The word עַמּוֹ applied in the sense of 'people his' is simply a pleonasm, and does not give the exact definition of the word Pethor. If we were even to admit that, instead of עַמּוֹ, there would be in the original עַמָּו, this version, which is an allusion to the Ammonites, *although sanctioned by the translators of the Vulgate and Peshita*, does not determine the situation of Pethor, which, according to Deut. xxiii. 4 and Num. xxii. 5, lay in Mesopotamia, whilst according to existing historical documents the boundaries of the Ammonites never reached so far.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore more likely to suppose that the expression בְּנֵי-עַמּוֹ (of the sons of Amu), similar in its construction to בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל (the sons of Israel), בְּנֵי-קֶרֶם (the sons of the East), and many other like expressions, indicate a certain nation, Amu or Amu,<sup>2</sup> on whose territory stood the town of Pethor. As we do not find the required information either in the Holy Scriptures or in traditions, we must seek for an explanation elsewhere. The fact of the sacred historian Moses having been born and educated in Egypt makes us naturally suppose that, notwithstanding his long residence in the desert of the Sinaitic peninsula, he must have sometimes made use of Egyptian names. It would seem, therefore, above all, expedient to consult first of all the Egyptian chronicles. The inscriptions on the monuments of the Pharaohs furnish us with the following data in reference to this question:—

(a) The names of the different tribes of Asia and Africa

<sup>1</sup> See De Geer, *Dissert. de Bîl.* pp. 9, 10.

<sup>2</sup> The interpretation of עַמּוֹ in the sense of עַמּוֹ (people his) has probably originated from the circumstance that, before the birth of Christ, when the vocals of the Massoreth vocalisation were not used, the Egyptian word Amu, and the Hebrew expression 'people his,' were written in the same manner עַמּוֹ; and as the word 'amu' was not mentioned in the history of Egypt at the time of the translation of the Septuagint, nor earlier, those who had not lived in Egypt may never have heard it. Thus it happened that, at a later period, the Hebrews understood the word עַמּוֹ of the above-cited verse in the nominal sense 'people his,' and read עַמּוֹ as 'amo.'

mentioned in the Egyptian chronicles terminate by the letter *ḥ* (u), as, for example, Shassu, Halu, Libu.

(b) In the chronicles of the Pharaohs, who had lived shortly before the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, there is frequent mention of a numerous people, or a whole group of tribes, called Amu, who lived in the north-east of Egypt; and in the Egyptian chronicles it is said that the territory of Amu was inhabited, amongst other tribes, by the people of Heta, Har or Halu, Rutinu, and (the lands) Naharain or Naharin.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In the present case the Egyptian monuments give us an insight into the political and territorial relations between the nations of anterior Asia at the time of the nineteenth dynasty of the Pharaohs between the end of the sixteenth and half of the thirteenth century before Christ. Our information is founded on the following communications of the German scholar Brugsch: 'Science has recognised Amu long ago as the representative of the Semitic tribes, although from our point of view the name of Amu has a wider signification, and includes many nations and tribes only distantly akin to the Semites. Amongst the most remarkable nations dwelling on the territory of Amu, in the history of Egypt, we meet with the people of Huta, Har (or Hal), and Ruten (or Luten), former inhabitants of Palestine and Syria, whose actions are worthy of notice' (pp. 75, 76). Further, we read on the 242nd page that 'the demotic translation of the great stone of Tanis, written in two languages (known as the decree of Canop), a document of the time of the Ptolemies, has given us the means of knowing for certain that the name applied by the people of that time to Syria was Asher; but the most ancient name of that country, deciphered on the hieroglyphic part of the stone, was Rutennu, with the addition of "east"; therefore the terms Syria, Rutennu East, Asher, and Menti, used at different periods and in different languages, are identical. We also consider it necessary to mention another circumstance, although we do not insist upon its correctness, that in the latest name, Asher, are perhaps concealed traces of the ancient Semitic Ashur, or Assyria, whose geographical importance had also with the course of time diminished; in the end, the word Asher converted itself in the mouth of the people into Syria' (pp. 242, 243). 'The whole . . . country known to us through the Bible and classics as Palestine, Coele-Syria, and Syria, is denominated in the Egyptian inscriptions Ruten-Hir, or Luten-Hir, that is to say, "upper Ruten." This country was divided into a multitude of small kingdoms, each of which usually bore the name of some fortified place forming its capital. The Upper Ruten was inhabited by races whose origin presents a problem to many learned searchers of the present time. The great people Hita (the Hittites of the Bible) occupy the principal place amongst them; the kingdoms of Kir-Kamosh, Kadesh, and Megiddo were considered as the principal points of defence and gathering-places before attacking, and the allied kings with their armies generally assembled there. These people, therefore, played an important part in history sixteen and a half centuries

In the military chronicles of Egypt the country of Heta or Hita is usually mentioned as being situated next to the land of Naharain, or is identified with it.<sup>1</sup> The countries situated to the west of the upper course of the Euphrates,<sup>2</sup> such as Haliba (the present district of Aleppo), Kir-Kamosh, and other places, formed a part of the land of Hita. The land of Naharain, or Naharin, judging by numerous allusions in

before the commencement of our era, at the time when Tothmes I. was preparing for his campaign in Asia. The Egyptian inscriptions of that period often mention the names of Naharin, or Naharain, to denominate a considerable country lying near the above-named land of Upper Ruten. Although opinions differ as to the origin of this name, we must admit that this Egyptian word proceeds from a foreign source, as its Semitic origin cannot be doubted; Naharain being a Semitic word meaning a "land between two rivers," or between rivers. The Holy Scriptures mention "Aram Naharain" = "Aram of two rivers"; the name of Aram, that is to say, "Syria Aramæa," being in this case the principal indication. The commentators comprehend under the name of Aram-Naharain a vast expanse of land between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, i.e. Mesopotamia' (pp. 284, 285, 447).

<sup>1</sup> This vast territorial importance of the lands of Hita and Naharain is testified to by Brugsch: 'The great people of Hita occupies the most important place amongst the peoples of the country of Ruten. This land is situated next to that of Naharain (see above, Brugsch, pp. 284, 285). The lands of Naharain and Kittim (Hita) and the people of Amu are all named side by side in a poem composed in honour of the Pharaoh Tothmes III. (Brugsch, p. 351). Amongst the towns of Hita, those of Tunep (Dathna) and Haliba (Haleb) are well known to us; both had temples dedicated to Baal-Sutech. On the other hand, the name used in Egyptian inscriptions to indicate the country (or part of the country) belonging to Hita (Ka-tza-u-ta-na) indicates the country Gozan (Gauzanitis) lying to the east of the Euphrates between the towns of Circesium and Tapsacus (pp. 431, 432). This is particularly worthy of notice, as the town of Tunep is, according to another inscription, said to be situated in the land of Naharain. In the Theban inscription in the Rameseum it is related as follows: "(Began a new) war against a town of Hita where two statues of Pharaoh had been placed. They had been made by the king (during the time of his sovereignty). Then the king gathered (his warriors) and his chariots and ordered them to attack his enemies of Hita, who were in the environs of the town of Tunep in the land of Naharain. And the king clothed himself in full armour (and mounted his chariot), and he stood in battle against the town of his enemies, the Hittites, at the head of his warriors and his (chariots). And the king came again to put on his armour. (And he completely defeated) his enemies of Hita, who were in the environs of the town of Tunep in the land of Naharain"' (Brugsch, pp. 485, 486).

<sup>2</sup> About a century before the entrance of the Israelites into the Promised Land, the people of Hita had attained a remarkable degree of military power.

the Egyptian chronicles and by the similarity of names, appears identical with the Hebrew אֲרַם-נַהָרִים, literally 'Aram of the rivers,' or, in Greek, according to the Septuagint, *Μεσσοποταμία*. In Deut. xxiii. 4, Pethor is defined by the words אֲרַם-נַהָרִים—Pethor of Aram, between the rivers—and amongst the numerous towns of the land of Hita (adjoining Mesopotamia, or identical with it), the town of Pederi<sup>1</sup> is mentioned in the military chronicles of the Pharaohs. We may therefore credibly affirm that the town of Pethor is identical with Pederi, situated in the land of Hita, in the territory of the people of Amu.

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'During the wars of King Tothmes III. against the Syrian nations and towns of anterior Asia, the so-called Hittites appeared on the scene of the yearly repeated and prolonged wars as a powerful people led by their own kings. The Egyptian inscriptions of the time call the Hittites "a great people," or "a great country," apparently not so much in reference of the vastness of its territory as out of a feeling of respect for the chivalrous qualities and bravery of the people of Hita, whom they considered their equals in those qualities. We do not think that it would be an error to maintain that the people of Heta, or Hita, are the same nation mentioned in the Holy Scriptures under the name of Hittites, or children of Heth, as the contemporaries of Abraham (Gen. xxiii.). When Tothmes III. made war against them and took their town by assault, they were already a powerful people living in the northern part of Syria. In the beginning of the nineteenth dynasty the power of the people of Hita extended over all the surrounding nations. They were the predecessors of the Assyrian power, and occupied the first place in the league of kings and cities of anterior Asia. Their influence increased every year, and became at last so strong that the names of the kings of Hita appear in the Egyptian inscriptions, and the names of their gods are mentioned with respect' (Brugsch, p. 431). In the poem of 'Pentaura,' the following nations are enumerated as vassals of the king of Heta or Hita: 'And when the king approached the town, there came at the same time the despised king of Hita's enemies. He gathered around him all the nations of Hita; there arrived in full numbers all the people (of the land) of Naharain, (of the land) of Aratu, (of the land) of Dardany, (the people) of Mazu, Pidaza, Malunno, Karkish (or Kashkish), Leka, Katzadana, Kir Kamish, Akarit, Kati, the people of Anaugas all, (one by one), Mushanet, and Kadesh. He (the king of Hita) did not leave a single people on his way without bearing it away with him. Their numbers were innumerable; there never was anything similar. They covered the mountains and valleys like locusts on account of their multitude. He (the king of Hita) did not leave either silver or gold to his people, he took away all their goods and property, and gave them to the people who followed him to the war' (Brugsch, p. 476; cf. pp. 467, 477, 479.

<sup>1</sup> Brugsch, *Egypt*, pp. 435, 280.

This supposition appears the more credible, as we find it confirmed by the testimony of the Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions. On the obelisk of Shalmaneser II. is written: 'I passed the Euphrates, I took away the town (its population) to Assyria, I took yonside the Euphrates near the river Sagurri, what the Syrians (in the original Hattai) call the town of Pitru, I took into my possession.'<sup>1</sup>

Therefore this Pitru was situated in the land of Hatti, on the west shore of the Euphrates, to the mouth of the Sagurri flowing from the west. According to the ancient cuneiform inscriptions of the twelfth and preceding centuries, the people of Hatti lived to the west of the middle Euphrates as far as the Orontes (between Samosata and Balis), and were divided into numerous little kingdoms, amongst which Karchemish on the Euphrates occupied a prominent position,<sup>2</sup> Haleb<sup>3</sup> being supposed to have been the central point of this country. It is therefore easy to see that the land of Hatti occupied the western borders of Mesopotamia, being identical with the land of Hita mentioned in the Egyptian chronicles, and that the

<sup>1</sup> See Schrader, E., *Die Keilinschriften und d. Alte Testament, zweite u. v. Aufl.*, pp. 155, 156. The inscription of Shalmaneser II., discovered at the source of the Tigris, says: 'I mounted from Kitlala and directed my steps towards Kar Shalmaneser; with the help of bottles of sheepskins I crossed the Euphrates a second time during its flooding. The tribute of the kings, who are yonside the Euphrates, namely, of Sangara, king of Karchemish, Kundaspi-Kumasha, Aram, of the sons of Huzi, Lalla-Lallida (?), Haiana, of the sons of Gabara, Hyrparid-Patina, Hyrparud-Hamhuma; gold, silver, lead, copper, the objects of copper I have destined for the town of Assurus; I have taken yonside the Euphrates on the river Sagur what the Syrian inhabitants call the town of Pethor, and have taken as booty everything it contains. From the river Euphrates I marched further against the town of Halman (Haleb-Aleppo).' The same, pp. 195, 196.

<sup>2</sup> See Schrader, E., *Die Keilinschriften und d. Alte Testament, zweite u. v. Aufl.*, p. 108; cf. pp. 195, 196.

<sup>3</sup> Schrader, p. 117: 'Northern Syria, between the Euphrates and the Orontes, with its central point Haleb, was not, according to our opinion, inhabited in ancient times by the Aramites; it bore amongst the Assyrians the name of Mat-Hatti (p. 107 *et seq.*). This country took the name of Syria much later, during the subjection of the land of Hita to Assyria in the time of Tiglath-Pileser and Sargon at the end of the eighth century B.C.' See the same, p. 33.

town of Pitru is the same as the Pederi of the Egyptian inscriptions and the Pethor mentioned in the Bible, slightly altered in the Assyrian dialect. And as the Assyrian Hatti, Egyptian Hita, and the adjacent Naharîn belonged to the vast territory of Amu, therefore Pethor was also in the land of the people of Amu, or 'in the land of the sons of Amu.'

Hence Pethor was situated to the north-east of Moab, in the land of Aram, or Haran, at a short distance from the existing town of Aleppo, on the high western shore of the Euphrates, near the town of Tipsak and the famous Euphrates bridge on the highway from Egypt to Assyria.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> According to the opinion of Calmet (*Comm. 1 ad Num.*), it is more correct to suppose that Pethor was situated beyond the Euphrates, near the town of Tipsak. Knobel also supposes that Pethor was situated on the eastern shore of the Euphrates. 'Here' (that is to say, in Mesopotamia), says Knobel, 'at a few days' journey to the south of Circesium, Zosimus (iii. 14) knows of Φαθοῦσαι, and opposite to it, on an island of the river, a stronghold (Veste), the name of which he has not remarked, as it undoubtedly belonged to Φαθοῦσαι. Instead of this φαθοῦσαι, it is Βεθαῦρα in Ptolomeus, v. 18, 6. It seems that both names are a mutilation of פֶּתוֹר, פֶּתוֹרָה, and therefore identical with Anah, an ancient place mentioned by the classics of the first Christian centuries, e.g., under the name of Αναθῶ by Isidorus Harak (Isid. Harak, p. 4), as Anatha by Ammian. Marcellinus, xxiv. 1, 6 (Knobel, *Kurzgef. Handbuch. L. xiii. zu Num. xxii. 5*). But there are no satisfactory reasons for considering these conjectures certain. Keil says about the conjectures of Knobel that the combination of the name of Pethor with Φαθοῦσαι, a spot lying to the south of Circesium (Zosimus, 14, 4) and Βεθαῦρα of Ptolomeus, v. 18, 6, and its identification with Anah 'Αναθῶ is highly improbable (*Bibl. Comment. über d. a. Test. zu Num. xxii. 5, 6*). In fact, according to the data at hand, Anah is situated on the 34th degree of latitude and 5th of northern longitude in a part of Mesopotamia which never bore the name of Aram, and never belonged to Syria. In the meantime Onkelos, who is undoubtedly well acquainted with Mesopotamia, supposes Pethor to have been situated in Syria on the Euphrates. On the other hand, Mesopotamia נַחֲרִיִּם, the Naharîn of the Egyptian hieroglyphs, must have undoubtedly meant to Moses only Northern Mesopotamia, lying in the territory of the Hittites, Haranites, and Assyrians, for Moses was a descendant of an emigrant from the land of Aram (Deut. xxvi. 5), and had been born in Egypt. The learned D. Chwolson, who is an authority on the question, declares Aram to be identical with Harran, and the Aramites with the Harranites (*Die Ssabier und der Ssabismus*, i. 315). The argument that Pethor was situated in the land of the sons of Amu near Harran is also strengthened by other considerations. It is a known fact that Harran was celebrated since the most ancient times by the worship of

§ 4. According to the geographical position of the town of Pethor, defined by us, the road to it must have lain in the north-eastern direction; but, as the Bible gives us no information respecting the road which at that time united the eastern coast of the Dead Sea with the land of Amu, where lay Pethor, we can only make conjectures as to the route by which the messengers of Moab went to Balaam. These conjectures are founded upon the following data:—

It is undoubtedly known that there are no natural impediments to prevent a direct journey from the Arnon to the banks of the Euphrates (near Karchemish and Tipsak); on the contrary, this country had always been intersected, and is so to the present day, by numerous caravan roads.<sup>1</sup>

The patriarch Jacob, returning from Haran to Canaan, was overtaken by his father-in-law Laban, the Haranite, to the east of the Galilean Sea on Mount Gilead (Gen. xxxi. 23), which lies nearly on the same meridian as the district of Damascus. The messengers of Balak must have therefore chosen the shortest and most convenient way—one lying to the east of the kingdoms of Og of Bashan and Sihon of the Amorites, recently conquered by the Israelites—and there is every reason to suppose that the Moabite messengers travelled to Pethor by the great caravan road which crosses the land of

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the moon and oracles. The Roman Emperor Julian interrogated the oracle of the moon of that place as to the issue of his campaign against the Persians (see Soliarsky, *Biblical and Biographical Dictionary*, vol. iv. 332, under the word *Harran*). The greater part of the commentators of the Bible (see Gesen. *Lexic. Hebr. Chald.*; De Geer, *De Bil.* p. 8; Hengst. *Gesch. Bil.* p. 35) consider the name of Pethor as a derivation of פֶּתַר, 'to discover,' 'to explain,' particularly in the sense of interpreting dreams, as, for example, in Gen. xl. 8 and xli. 12, 13, by analogy with the Hebrew word פִּתְרוֹן, interpretation, in Gen. xl. 8 and xli. 11, 12. Hence comes the conclusion that the dwelling-place of Balaam, Pethor, received its name from the experts in the art of magic who chiefly dwelt there.

<sup>1</sup> See Soliarsky, *Biblic. Diction.* vol. iii. pp. 594, 595, under the word *Syria*. A caravan road is known to have existed in most ancient times between South Palestine and Harran, through Damascus and Tipsak, by the testimony of the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. xxvii. 22 *et seq.*) and that of Ammian. Marcellinus, xiv. 3 (see Chwolson, *Die Ssabier*, i. 314, 341, 342).



the Ammonites, their kinsmen, and passes east of the sources of the Jabbok by Jeromacsus, Damascus, and Tadmor. The messengers had to pass before reaching Pethor a distance of about five hundred versts<sup>1</sup> (415 English miles).<sup>2</sup> Several commentators of the Bible have put forward this considerable distance as a reason for doubting the fact of the call of Balaam from Aram, causing them to maintain, in spite of the direct testimony of the Bible (Num. xxiii. 7; Deut. xxiii. 4), that Balaam was a Midianite.<sup>3</sup> Such doubts can only proceed from forgetfulness, or ignorance, of similar facts in the history of the nations of anterior Asia. The fertile land of Canaan, lying on the way to the rich granary Egypt, was well known to the inhabitants of Mesopotamia even in the times of Abraham, and twice caused invasions of the kings living on the farther side of the Euphrates against the kings of Palestine (Gen. xiv. 1-12).<sup>4</sup>

It seems that at that time journeys were frequently made from the Chaldean town of Ur to Palestine (through Harran and Karchemish), and from Palestine to Egypt, by a well-known highway (Gen. xi. 31, xii. 5-9). It is now authentically known, owing to the interpretation of the Egyptian chronicles, that the Egyptian kings of the nineteenth dynasty marched with their armies through Palestine to Syria and Mesopotamia during the century which preceded the entrance of the Israelites into Palestine, and therefore a short time before the call of Balaam by the Moabites. We find details of the expeditions of the Egyptians against Mesopotamia through Palestine and Syria in the chronicles (inscriptions on the temple of Ammon) of the reign of Rameses the Great (about the time of the entrance of the Israelites into Palestine),

<sup>1</sup> *Translator's note*:—A verst equals 1166½ yards, i.e. (say) 0·83 English miles.

<sup>2</sup> See Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> See De Geer's *Diss. de. Bil.* p. 10; Masius in *Comm. ad Jos.* xiii. 22, p. 236.

<sup>4</sup> Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, i. pp. 148, 151.

at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the fifteenth century B.C. These inscriptions do not only describe the battles and trophies of victory, but they enumerate the nations (towns) of the Upper Ruten (Syria and Coele-Syria), and mention, amongst others, the land of Naharāin.<sup>1</sup> It is naturally to be supposed that a violent commotion arose amongst the entire population of Syria and Canaan at the appearance of the numerous and valiant armies of the Pharaohs and their northern adversaries, and that frequently, after these campaigns, separate tribes found themselves transplanted to the opposite end of Palestine. Such was also the case during the great emigration of the Eastern nations to Europe in the fifth century of our era. The remnants of one tribe or family joined another, and even separate individuals found themselves suddenly involved in the social life of some hitherto entirely foreign tribe. This is the reason why one of the kings of Edom, Saul, came by birth from Rehoboth by the river Euphrates (Gen. xxxvi. 37), and the Canaanites of the time of Joshua used 'goodly Babylonish garments' (Josh. vii. 21). One of the principal reasons of such easy locomotion is that the greater part of the population of anterior Asia was either nomad or semi-nomad, and therefore could easily change their dwelling-places. Owing to these conditions, 'there existed between the banks of the Nile and those of the Euphrates a very profitable exchange of the best products of human ingenuity or artistic skill.'<sup>2</sup>

There is one fact in particular which serves as a convincing proof that the Moabites were well acquainted with the religious faith of the inhabitants of Mesopotamia. It is well known that the town of Karchemish on the Euphrates, which already existed in the sixteenth century B.C., and was situated at the mouth of the affluent Havura, or Hovara, means,

<sup>1</sup> Brugsch, *Egypt*, pp. 441-444, 470-486. The existence of peaceful relations is confirmed by the inscriptions on the papyrus of Anastasius the Third (*Ibid.* pp. 548-550).

<sup>2</sup> Brugsch, *Egypt*, p. 286.

properly speaking, 'the town of Chemosh.'<sup>1</sup> Now Chemosh was the national divinity of the Tyrians and Moabites, who were therefrom called 'the people of Chemosh' (Num. xxi. 29).<sup>2</sup> How could such a similarity, in the names of the gods, have occurred between two nations living at the opposite ends of Palestine? It could only have happened through direct intercourse in times of peace and war.

In times of peace, pastoral nomad life, as well as trade, was a means of communication between the nations of anterior Asia. 'Terah and his son Abraham led a nomad life, and their descendants from Ishmael and the sons of Keturah keep to this mode of life to the present day.'<sup>3</sup> The allies of the Moabites, the Midianites, owned numerous flocks of large and small cattle (Num. xxxi. 32-34), and may have wandered with their flocks as far as the Euphrates.

There can therefore be no doubt that means of communication existed between the inhabitants of South Palestine and the Mesopotamians in the time of Balaam; but the question arises as to the ways and means by which communication between two countries lying so far apart as Moab and Mesopotamia was facilitated and expedited. It is known for certain that the nomad tribes of anterior Asia had scarcely any horses,<sup>4</sup> and that either camels were used for carrying burdens, travelling, and keeping up commercial connections (Gen. xxxvii. 25; Judg. vi. 5; 1 Chron. xii. 40; 2 Kings viii. 9; Isa. xxx. 6),<sup>5</sup> or asses (Gen. xlii. 26, xlv. 23; 2 Kings iv. 24, etc). The messengers of Balak travelled probably to Pethor on asses, and not on camels, a supposition founded on the following data:—

<sup>1</sup> See Gesen. *Lex. Hebr. Chald.* under כִּימֹשׁ, and Brugsch, *Egypt*, p. 284.

<sup>2</sup> See Soliarsky, *Biblic. and Geog. Dict.*, under the word *Chemosh*, iv. 309. The similarity of the Moabite and Mesopotamian religions is regarded as indisputable in theological science (see Ebrard, *Apologetic*, ii. pp. 135-209, in the Russian translation).

<sup>3</sup> Archimandrite Jerome, *Archæology*, i. 43.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* i. pp. 66-73.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* i. p. 43.

Although it is frequently mentioned in the Bible what kind of cattle belonged to the different people, nothing is said about the cattle of the Moabites; but all the cattle belonging to their allies, the Midianites, is enumerated as the booty of the Israelites in the account of their destruction (Num. xxxi.).

No other beasts of burden are mentioned except asses, to the number of 'threescore and one thousand,' therefore it is more probable to suppose that the Midianites used asses for their journeys.

On the other hand, we see in Num. xxii. 21-33, that Balaam undertook the journey from Mesopotamia on his ass; but, as he set off to the land of the Moabites after a second call, and must therefore have wished to hasten his journey, he probably had exact information as to whether it was possible to reach Moab on one ass. It is therefore to be supposed that there had been already examples of similar journeys, and the elders of Moab and Midian (Num. xxii. 7-15) must also have made both journeys to Pethor on asses for the following reasons:—

'Asses are very convenient animals for riding, particularly in the mountains, as they have a surer step than horses, and go pretty quickly. According to the testimony of Niebuhr, an ass accomplishes half a German mile (c.  $2\frac{3}{4}$  Eng. miles) in an hour's time; and, according to Müller, he accomplishes a whole mile in an hour on level ground, so that his driver can hardly keep up at a running pace with him. Besides this, he is easily fed, which is a great advantage for a journey through the wilderness, so that in the East the ass is usually used to this very day for riding.'<sup>1</sup>

There is, therefore, little doubt that the messengers of King Balak made both journeys to Pethor on asses.

But here arises another perplexing question, How could these two journeys to Mesopotamia, which lies at a distance of five hundred versts from the land of Moab, have been made

<sup>1</sup> Archimandrite Jerome, *Archæology*, p. 62.

so quickly, under such peculiar circumstances, if asses, generally regarded as slow-going animals, were the means of conveyance used?<sup>1</sup> It would have been more natural for Balak, anxious for a speedy solution of his difficulties, to send his messengers to Balaam on camels or horses, otherwise, how long would it have taken them to make those journeys to the banks of the Euphrates (Num. xxii. 15 *et seq.*) twice backwards and forwards (a distance of 1660 Eng. miles), when, on the other hand, it is well known that the Israelites did not remain more than two months<sup>2</sup> in the plains of Moab before committing whoredom and joining in the worship of Baal-peor at the instigation of Balaam (cf. Num. xxv.; Deut. i. 3)? But this difficulty is explained by the following considerations:—

In our northern countries we have no idea of the degree of usefulness of the ancient race of asses used in the south-east for riding. 'The northern ass . . . is known to be a lazy, obstinate, perverse animal, generally, though unjustly, considered the type of stupidity. On the contrary, the southern ass, particularly the Egyptian, is an excellent animal, hard-working and enduring, not less serviceable than a horse, and even in many respects its superior. . . . Endurance, a light, quick step, and an easy gallop, make asses capital riding animals. . . . The Arabian asses bred in the Yemen are incomparably the handsomest of the race; there are two species of asses; one large and spirited, very quick, and comfortable for long journeys; the other, smaller and weaker, is used to carry burdens. . . . A riding ass which satisfies all requirements is more expensive than a horse of middling quality, and often costs not less than 400 to 500 thalers (from £60 to £75). Persons of the highest distinction alone use the best breed.<sup>3</sup> . . . In general, the swiftness of the Arabian riding asses has always surpassed even that of the horse and camels.' Niebuhr says 'that the riding ass passes with an even step in

<sup>1</sup> See note 2, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, iii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Brehm, *Life of Animals*, vol. ii. pp. 358, 359.

half an hour's time over a distance equivalent to 1750 human steps, whilst the large camels who carry burdens pass over a distance of only 975 steps during that time, and small dromedaries not more than 1500 steps.<sup>1</sup> These quotations explain why asses, or she-asses, which were generally considered still more convenient,<sup>2</sup> were chosen as the speediest mode of conveyance for the Moabite messengers. But is it possible to travel a distance of 2000 versts in two months even with such swift-footed animals? We can answer in the affirmative, as there are several analogous cases which serve as proofs that such journeys were performed without particular difficulty in ancient times. We see in Gen. xxxi. 21-23 that Jacob, notwithstanding the difficulty of travelling with his wives, children, and great flocks of cattle, travelled in ten days over a distance of 500 versts (415 English miles) from Harran (which is farther to the north than Pethor) to Mount Gilead (to the north of the Jabbok). His father-in-law Laban hastened his movements in pursuing him, and passed over the same distance in seven days. The distance from Mount Gilead to the land of Moab was not more than 100 versts, *i.e.* the fifth part of the way from the river Arnon to the Euphrates. Therefore, if Jacob, under unfavourable conditions for rapid travel, could have traversed in ten days the distance from Harran to Mount Gilead, which (in an approximatively straight line) is a little less than the distance between the Arnon and the Euphrates, so much the more could the Moabite messengers accomplish the four journeys (of 500 versts each) in the course of some forty days, or, at the utmost, of a month and a half. Finally, given the extraordinary circumstances of the case, there is reason to suppose that the Moabite messengers did the same as Laban, and hastened their movements so as to make the four journeys in twenty-eight ( $4 \times 7$ ) or thirty-two ( $4 \times 8$ ) days. The

<sup>1</sup> Brehm, *Life of Animals*, vol. ii. p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> Archimandrite Jerome, *Bibl. Archaeology*, i. p. 63, note 21.

probability of such speed is confirmed by a similar episode in the history of Greece. During the second Greco-Persian war, the Spartans, hurrying to the succour of the Athenians against the Persians, accomplished the distance between Sparta and Athens, about thirty German miles (210 versts), in the space of three days;<sup>1</sup> they therefore made about 70 versts a day on foot in a mountainous country. If, then, the ancients could accomplish without particular difficulty a distance of 500 or 520 versts in eight days, and 2000 versts ( $500 \times 4$ ) in thirty-two to thirty-five days, Balaam might very well have arrived at the land of Moab<sup>2</sup> at least two months before the repetition of the Covenant by Moses before his death (Deut. i.-xxiii.), and have taken an active part in the events described in chapters xxii.-xxv. of the Book of Numbers.

§ 5. Therefore, the Moabite messengers, travelling at a rate of over 60 versts a day, with the rewards of divination in their hand (Num. xxii. 7),<sup>3</sup> arrived on the eighth or ninth day

<sup>1</sup> Schlosser, *Universal History*, vol. i. p. 363 (Russian edition of Ser. Solovievitch, 1861).

<sup>2</sup> Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, iii. p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> A difference exists between the Slavonic and Russian translations of this passage of the Bible. In the former there is the word БОЛХОВАНІЕ (divination), and in the latter the words ПОДАРКИ ЗА БОЛХОВАНІЕ (presents for divination). This proceeds from a difference in the understanding of the Hebrew word קִסָּם. Its radical signification is 'sorcery,' 'conjuring' (Gesen. *Lex. Hebr. Chald.*; Stockii *Cl. L.S.*); but in the course of time, and under special historical conditions, the word קִסָּם began to indicate the honorary gifts of those who were in need of appealing to magic power, and who offered them to the sorcerers (see De Geer, *Dissert.* p. 29; Oort, *Disput.* p. 7; Fürst, *Hebr. Chald. Handwörterbuch*). The translators of the Pentateuch into Greek, wishing to be extremely accurate, translated the word in its most literal sense, and it passed in the same manner into the Slavonic text; but the Targumists and the translator of the Vulgate already noticed the incongruity of using the word קִסָּם in this sense, and found it more expedient to translate it metonymically as the 'rewards of divination.' This translation was adopted in the Russian and other editions, and is by no means far-fetched, for there are other Hebrew words which have a double sense, such as בְּשֵׂרָה (joyful tidings, and reward for the same) (2 Sam. iv. 10); חַטָּאת (sin, and sacrifice for a sin) (cf. Exod. xxix. 14; Lev. iv. 3; Num. vii. 16; Prov. xiv. 34); μωθός ἀδικίας (the

at the Mesopotamian town of Pethor and reached the above-named famous sorcerer<sup>1</sup> Balaam. The principal aim of their message was to transmit to Balaam, in the name of their king, Balak, a special invitation, with the requisite explanation of the circumstances of the case, exactly interpreted as follows: '*Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt, and covers the face of the earth with an immense multitude of men, so that they fill all the space, which he [Balak] can survey from his kingdom,*<sup>2</sup> and this people has pitched its camp in close

wages of unrighteousness) (2 Pet. ii. 15, 16; cf. Oort, *Disput.* p. 7). The presents destined for Balaam probably consisted of money, jewels, of gold, chains, bracelets, rings, earrings, tablets (cf. Num. xxxi. 50-52). Presents in the East were not only given with the view of obtaining something, or of gaining favour in the eyes of the one to whom the gift was offered, but also as a sign of respect (Archimandrite Jerome, *Bibl. Archæology*, vol. i. part ii. pp. 155, 156). As in ancient times it was a universal custom to express respect by giving presents, gifts were even offered to the true prophets of Israel (1 Sam. ix. 7 *et seq.*; 1 Kings xiii. 7-14; 2 Kings v. 15 *et seq.*, viii. 8 *et seq.*), and not always refused (2 Kings iv. 42; Jer. xl. 5), and so much the more were presents obligatory in the intercourse with heathen priests and sorcerers. In ancient times it was considered an absolute duty to give presents to the soothsayer, or prophet, of whom one asked *advice*, or made inquiries about the future. The heathen sorcerers on their part considered it obligatory to receive gifts for their predictions, and looked upon their occupation as a branch of commerce. Thus, the soothsayer Deiphon was hired by the Corinthians to fill the office of foreteller in their army (Herod. ix. 95). The ceremony of offering presents, particularly if they were considerable, was performed in the East with the greatest pomp and outward show, as many men and beasts of burden as possible being taken to form a long and imposing procession. Every beast of burden carried only one thing on its back, even if it was quite light; every man carried one thing, however small it might have been, and must absolutely hold it in both hands. We see these processions in the pictures found in the ruins of Persepolis, and travellers relate the same (Archimandrite Jerome, *Bibl. Archæology*, i. p. 157). 'Everything which might be of any use was offered as a gift, but the presents principally consisted of gold and silver articles, money, rich and handsome stuffs, various garments, arms, and eatables, which were sometimes of trifling value' (cf. 1 Sam. ix. 7, xvi. 20; Job xlii. 11; Gen. xliii. 11).

<sup>1</sup> He is thus considered by the Hebrew writer Philo (see *Acta Sanctorum*, extracts from *De Vita Moïsis*, p. 122).

<sup>2</sup> The phrase '(cover) the face of the earth,' *תִּכְסֶּה כְּפָאן הָאָרֶץ* (Num. xxii. 5; Exod. x. 15), is not a literal translation, but is a correct interpretation of the Hebrew words *עַיִן הָאָרֶץ* (the eye of the earth). The accuracy of the translation in the Septuagint is particularly evident in this case; it is well



proximity to his land, and if it crosses the Arnon can easily attack his kingdom. This is why he [Balak] greatly desires that Balaam should come and curse this hateful newly come people, and under these conditions the king of Moab hopes<sup>1</sup> to

known that 'in the Egyptian memorials the eye is the hieroglyphic sign, expressing Egypt' (see Millington, *Signs and Wonders*, p. 145; Savvaitzky, *Departure of the Israelites from Egypt*, p. 156). It is possible that, from the Egyptian point of view, the eye was not only the symbol of the Egyptian land or of the horizon of the Egyptian kingdom, but of every other land or country. This representation of the eye, in a metaphorical sense, must have been current amongst the Moabites, who were well acquainted with Egypt, and particularly amongst the Israelites during their sojourn in Egypt, as, for them, Egypt, under the symbol of an eye, was nothing but a part of the earth, a certain country. Moses, the writer of the Pentateuch, in consequence of his Egyptian education (Acts vii. 22) and sojourn amongst his people, may have used this purely Egyptian expression in the sense of 'face' of the earth, or 'part of the earth' surveyed from a certain point.' In the present case this expression indicates the fact that the Israelites were at that time so numerous, that they covered with their tents, goods, and flocks all the space visible from the promontories of the land of Moab in the northern and north-eastern direction.

<sup>1</sup> We meet with some differences in the reading of the sixth verse of the twenty-second chapter of the Book of Numbers in the manuscripts of the translation of the Septuagint which have reached us, and these differences have partly affected the Slavonic translation. In the Vatican codex (edited, of course, by Tischendorf) we read the second part of the first half of the verse thus—*ὅτι λαχύει ὁδὸς, ἣ ἡμεῖς*; but in the Alexandrian codex, and in the Aldine and Complutensian edd. (see interlinear variations of the German scholar Stier in the *Polyglotten-Bibel*), we read *λαχύστέρος μου ἔστιν*. This reading is the foundation of the Slavonic translation. But the reading of the Vatican codex has no proofs to support it, while the reading of the Alexandrian codex is to be met with in the fragments of Origen's *Hexapla* which have been preserved. It is also accepted in the Vulgate, and hands down the Hebrew original very correctly. The difference between the Slavonic and Russian translations in the expressions *ѡѡе возмѡжемъ* (if we can), and *можетъ быть, я тогда буду въ состоянїи* (peradventure I shall be able), proceeds evidently from an incorrect reading of the Greek translation from which the Slavonic text has been taken.

*ѡѡе возмѡжемъ* supposes in the Greek original *ἐὰν δυνάμεθα*, which is preserved in the Vatican codex edited by K. Tischendorf. But this reading may be considered as a mutilation of the original:—(1) In the Cambridge edition of the Vatican codex, in the Alexandrian codex, in the Aldine edition, we read *εἰ ἄρα δυνήσομαι*, the same as in the parallel passage of the eleventh verse of the same chapter; (2) *ἐὰν δυνάμεθα* has no corresponding expression in the Hebrew text; (3) on the contrary, the undeniably authentic Hebrew *אִלָּא אִלָּא* is in accordance with the best grammatical investigations of the Hebrew language (see Ewald's *Grammar*, § 285), and

*conquer the Israelites, and drive them far away from his land into the wilderness, because Balak is persuaded that Balaam possesses the magic power, that he whom he blesses is blessed, and he whom he curses is cursed'* (Num. xxii. 5, 6).

It is not difficult to see by these words that the principal motive for the call of Balaam from such a distant land was the trust that the Mesopotamian sorcerer, by the power of his curse, would help the Moabites to conquer the Israelites and to drive them away from the plains of Moab. On what did Balak found his faith in a co-operation so unusual in cases of international strife? If on nothing, what would be the sense of the words '*for I wot, that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed*'? (ver. 6.) It will be more expedient to refer the answer in full details to the following chapter.

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means, properly speaking, *el ἄρα δύνησμαι*; in Slavonic, *НѢГЛН ВОЗМОГ҃҃҃* (if I can) (see lower, ver. 11); in Russian *МОЖЕТЪ БЫТЬ, Я БУДУ ВЪ СОСТОЯНІИ* (peradventure I shall be able).

Some commentators of the Bible find an inconsistency between the phrase '*peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them*,' and the following (showing absolute confidence in Balaam's magic power), '*for I wot, that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed*,' and they therefore attribute another meaning to the particle *ἄρα*. But even if Balak had, in general, absolute confidence in the efficacy of Balaam's curses, still, in this special case, he may not have supposed that these curses would have such an overpowering action over the Israelites as to give him the victory over them, with his army already weakened by the struggle with the Amorites. On the contrary, in view of such a powerful adversary, trust in Balaam's art was more than sufficient for Balak to depend only on hope, as he could not even have thought of smiting the Israelites (after the attempt he had already once made), if it had not been for his assurance in the destructive force of Balaam's curse.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BLESSING AND THE CURSE

*Numbers xxii. 6.*

§ 1. THE ancient custom of blessing or cursing on certain important occasions seems to have been practised since the earliest stage of man's existence. At least, it is well known that the holy patriarchs of the Old Testament used to pronounce blessings on certain joyful or sorrowful occasions, invoking happiness upon those who were blessed, whilst at other times they had recourse to cursing as a means of punishment for iniquities. The patriarch Noah cursed his son Ham for his insolent mockery of his father's weakness, and blessed his two other sons, Shem and Japheth, for their respectful conduct towards him (Gen. ix. 24-27). The patriarch Isaac, feeling the approach of death, blessed his two sons, Jacob and Esau, prophesying in prayer the future destinies of their descendants (Gen. xxvii. 27-29, 39, 40), and the patriarch Jacob blessed his twelve sons before his death in the same manner (Gen. xlix.). The prophet Moses commanded the Israelites, after they had entered the promised land, to pronounce a blessing from Mount Gerizim upon those who had obeyed the commandments, and a curse from Mount Ebal upon those who had disobeyed them (Deut. xi. 26-30, xxvii. 11-16). At a later period of the history of Israel the custom of blessing and cursing evidently became general (cf. Jer. xxix. 22), and found its highest and most perfect expression in the speeches of the prophets.

Amongst individual typical instances of cursing in the

history of Israel, we may mention the curse of Joshua against Jericho (Josh. vi. 17; cf. 1 Kings xvi. 34), and that of the prophet Elisha against the children who mocked him (2 Kings ii. 24). A blessing, בִּרְכָה (*beraha*, from the root בָּרַךְ), signified in general, when taken from the point of view of the patriarchs, everything good, everything that makes the life of man satisfied and joyful. By a curse, קִלְלָה (*kelala*, from קָלַל), the Israelites meant insult, outrage, and the most calamitous events (cf. Jer. xxix. 18). The blessing of the Church in the Old Testament was called forth either by a good and pious life in general, or by some individually great and noble action. The curse, on the contrary, was incurred either by a single transgression of the commandments of the Lord, or in general by the impious life either of separate individuals, or of a whole nation. According to the testimony of Moses, the fulfilment of the blessing for walking in God's ways was by the will of God manifested by victory over one's enemies, by success in all to which one sets one's hand, by spiritual strength, fruitfulness, plenteousness of goods, salubrity of the air, supremacy over other nations (Deut. xxviii. 7, 8). The consequences of the curse would be, on the contrary, that the Lord would send upon the accursed vexation and rebuke in all that they set their hand unto for to do—pestilence, consumption, fever, inflammation and other sickness, drought, blasting and mildew, powder and dust instead of rain. Or the Lord might send as a curse an invasion of enemies, who would smite the accursed people and bring terror upon them. They would be scattered amongst all the nations of the earth, smitten with madness and blindness and astonishment of heart. They would not prosper in their ways, they would meet with nothing but failures everywhere; their sons and daughters, their cattle and their fruits, would be taken from them; they would suffer contempt and oppression from other nations (Deut. xxviii. 20-44). Therefore to bless, בָּרַךְ, applied to the Lord (very seldom to man), meant to give happiness, to bestow every gift; and, applied

to those who pronounce the blessing in the form Ri, it meant imploring the help of the Lord, acknowledging His perfection, and praying to Him for the happiness of some one (Ps. cxxix. 8; 1 Chron. xvi. 2; Gen. xiv. 19).<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, to curse (אָרַר, or קָלַל, or נָקַב) meant to ask God to remove some one by *sending calamities upon him* (אָרַר),<sup>2</sup> or *to take away his strength and power of motion*, נָקַב (mobility),<sup>3</sup> as if to

<sup>1</sup> The verb בָּרַךְ generally means 'to send down something useful,' 'to drop down upon the knees as a sign of respect,' in a particular sense 'to bless' (see Stockii, Chr., *Clavis Linguae Sanctae*, Petropoli, 1827; Fürst, *Hebr. und Chald. Handwörterbuch*; Steinberg, *Dictionary*). The Septuagint not only translated this word בָּרַךְ in the corresponding places by εὐλογέω, 'to bless,' but made it possible to see what idea the ancients had of the verb בָּרַךְ used in the form of 'to bless.' Εὐλογέω is related to the word λόγιον by root, and to the word εὐλογία by basis (see *Greco-Russian Dictionary* of Grazinsky and Benzeler). The word λόγιον means 'sentence,' 'the word of God, or of an oracle (of a prophet)'; εὐλογία means 'gratitude,' 'liberality.' Hence εὐλογέω means pronouncing a word, which calls forth from the hand of God spiritual and material welfare for him who is blessed.

<sup>2</sup> According to the opinion of Fürst, this is the fundamental signification of אָרַר, from אָר (see Fürst, *Handwörterbuch*). Most biblicists, however, understand the word אָרַר in the sense of 'to bring on a calamity either by word, or action, or by some object' (see Stockii *Clav. L. S.*), under the word אָרַר, 'to bring on a curse,' 'to call down harm upon somebody.' And the Septuagint translated אָרַר by ἀπαβαίνει, 'to pray God that He should cause somebody an injury, or' (Benzeler) 'ruin.'

<sup>3</sup> This word is thus transmitted by De Geer, p. 23, in common with other ancient and modern commentators. In the Septuagint the word נָקַב has the same signification as in 2 Kings xviii. 21: 'Upon which (Egypt) if a man lean, it will go into his hand and "pierce" (τρήσει from τρυπάω) it.' This signification is generally adopted (see Stockii *Clav. L. San.*; Fürst's *Handwörterbuch*; and Steinberg, *Hebrew-Russian Dictionary*). It is to be noticed that אָרַר and נָקַב, except in the signification 'to prick,' 'to pierce,' 'to wound with a word,' is also used in the sense of burning (see Steinberg, under the word אָרַר). The word אָרַר is similar to אָרַה, and the latter signifies, amongst other meanings, 'to chisel,' 'to hollow out'; whence proceeds אָרוֹה, 'a groove,' 'manger,' and הָרַה, 'to be inflamed' (cf. the Latin *areo, uro*, Russian *арюиѣ* and *ропѣиѣ*, 'vehement' and 'to burn.' For this reason those who pronounced conjurations and curses, sorcerers, bore amongst the Slavonians the qualificative name of *арюиѣ*, i.e. vehement (Afanassiev, p. 58).

pierce on the spot, or to bring into a state of consternation (קָלַל).<sup>1</sup>

§ 2. Therefore, both blessing and curse were pronounced of yore in the Church of the Old Testament in the name of God. Through the act of blessing, the Lord was implored to dispense His bounties to him who was blessed; whilst, on the contrary, by a curse He was solicited to send down calamity and distress upon the accursed. The fulfilment of the blessing and curse was committed entirely to the perfect will of God Almighty. Was this the curse expected from Balaam by the king of Moab, or something different? Did he mean a curse in the name of the God of Israel, or a magic conjuration? Most of the modern commentators of the Bible are inclined to think that Balak had in view a curse in the name of the God of Israel, and they founded their conjectures on the following considerations:—That Balak sent to fetch Balaam, precisely because he had heard by rumours, which had reached him, that Balaam cursed and blessed in the name of Jehovah; that, if he cursed in the name of heathen gods, Balak would not have sent for him, as there were doubtlessly amongst the Moabites sorcerers ready to use their magic art in the name of such divinities. According to the opinion of Hengstenberg,<sup>2</sup> Balak despaired of help in his difficult position from his native gods, and addressed himself to Balaam for the precise reason that he was a prophet of Jehovah. ‘Plunged in the darkness of heathen prejudice, believing that the magic conjurations of their worshippers had the power of directing the will of the gods in

<sup>1</sup> This word is used in the parallel passages of Deut. xxiii. 5 and Josh. xxiv. 9. While the fundamental signification is ‘to be movable,’ it means in the form קָלַל ‘to blaspheme,’ ‘to imprecate,’ ‘to curse.’ This verb differs from קָלַל and קָלַל, which express, properly speaking, the character of the action of cursing or conjuring in the sense of destruction or damage; קָלַל expressing more the consequences of this action, as, for example, decrease of strength (of weight) (cf. 2 Sam. xvi. 6, 7, 10, 13; 2 Kings ii. 24; Judg. ix. 27, 57, 7-20, 23-56).

<sup>2</sup> Hengstenberg, *Gesch. Bil.* p. 37; Kurtz, *Gesch.* ii. pp. 472-476.

any desired direction, Balak trusted that Balaam's curse would deprive the Israelites of the help and protection of Jehovah.<sup>1</sup> These conjectures are, however, scarcely in accordance with the real state of the case. First of all, such an opinion cannot be founded upon the nearest context (chapter xxii.). Secondly, Balak was a heathen, and certainly regarded the world from that point of view. It is in the meanwhile undeniable, as Hengstenberg himself testifies, that, in the opinion of a heathen, the magi had the power of compelling the gods to fulfil their desires by the force of their magic conjurations. Hence it is easy to conclude that the supernatural power of gods and demons was only an instrument for the fulfilment of the magi's will, and that the more or less compelling force of magic conjurations was the principal condition for the accomplishment of blessings and curses. Those who possessed the knowledge of all-powerful magic sentences had, according to the heathen creed, the power of evoking every calamity, or shielding from every misfortune, by the mere force of their conjurations (curses) and exorcisms (adjurations). One quite uninitiated or but little versed in this wisdom could do nothing, however powerful the god might be to whom he appealed with his magic conjurations. This was undoubtedly the point of view from which Balak regarded the soothsayer Balaam. Balak is persistent in expecting help from the Mesopotamian's curse (see Num. xxii. 17-37, xxiii. 11-13), and recognises the subordinacy of Balaam to the will of God only after the latter had twice involuntarily blessed the Israelites, and had repeatedly confessed that he was obliged to do as Jehovah said (cf. Num. xxii. 12, 20, 26). That Balak expected help from Balaam's magic curse is therefore indubitable. But what is such a curse, whence does it proceed, and in what does it differ from the curse pronounced by the patriarchs and other members of the chosen people?

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<sup>1</sup> Hengstenberg, *Gesch. Bil.* p. 37; Kurtz, *Gesch.* ii. pp. 472-476.

§ 3. If we take into consideration the generally acknowledged fact of the community of faith and customs amongst the first generations of the patriarch Noah's three sons, we may affirm, with certainty, that the striking fact of the curse of Ham, and of the blessing of his brothers, which was revealed in fact very soon afterwards by the different destinies of their descendants, must have for ever remained in the remembrance of the latter, and been carried with them in their distant wanderings. It is also highly probable that this wonderful and mysterious mode of punishment and reward found many imitators not only amongst the descendants of Shem, but also amongst those of his other brothers; and, with the perversion of divine worship and the spread of idolatry, it became converted into a dark and alluring science which called forth feelings either of religious awe, or overwhelming anxiety amongst the heathens.<sup>1</sup> At any rate, it became a permanent and common custom, having the character of a religious act, amongst the Egyptians (representatives of the Kushite race, the Hamites), the Chaldeans, and (their historical successors) the Assyrians, to recur in serious cases to something like blessing and cursing in order to avert sicknesses, hostile attacks, and various misfortunes. The ancient sacred custom of blessing and cursing was by them transformed into sorcery, which from the point of view of these nations was divided into sacred beneficial magic (otherwise called white magic) and pernicious witchcraft (black magic). It is unnecessary, in the present case, to expatiate upon the general history and topics of these arts, or knowledge; but, as the spiritual life of the Moabites and Midianites, and most of the Syrian nations, developed itself under the undeniable influence of the Chaldeans (and partly of the Egyptians) and of the inhabitants of the banks of the Euphrates generally, it is indispensable to give a short sketch of Chaldean magic, which will enable us to have a clear

<sup>1</sup> This explanation of the origin of magic conjuration is given by De Geer, *Dissert. de Bil.* pp. 30, 31.



insight into Balak's views upon the character of magic curses and blessings.

A very explicit description of ancient Chaldean magic, of its forms, manifestations, and most important incidents, has been found in the recently deciphered ancient Akkadian magic writings; which, according to the opinion of scientists, belong to the second millennium before the birth of Christ (Lenormant, *Mag.*, pp. 142, 126, 155, 132). One of these documents represents a great board from the library of the royal palace of Nineveh with twenty-eight magical sentences, which are unfortunately fragmentary. They were pronounced in order to avert the action of the evil spirits, of sorcery, diseases, and other misfortunes to which man is daily exposed. These magical sentences finish usually by the same exorcising formula; it seems even, as if it was found necessary in certain cases, not only to read a separate magical sentence aloud, but sometimes even to read them all one after the other as a safeguard against the whole series of pernicious influences foreseen. This ancient document is worded, as are all the magical writings of the Assyrians and Chaldeans, in the Akkadian dialect, that is to say, in the Turanian language, which is of the same origin as the Finnish and Tartar, and was spoken by the most ancient populations living in the marshy plains of the lower Euphrates.<sup>1</sup>

To give a distinct idea of these magical exorcisms, we will cite a few sentences taken from the literal translation of the French Assyrian scholar Lenormant.

The ancient Akkadian text is always accompanied by a parallel Assyrian translation.<sup>2</sup>

‘Exorcism.

‘I. The malignant god, the malignant demon,

The demon of the wilderness, the demon of the mountainous ridges,

<sup>1</sup> Lenormant, Fr., *Die Magie und Wahrsagekunst der Chaldäer*, 1878, pp. 3, 4. Autoris. vom Verfass. bedeut. verbess. u. vermehrt. deutsche Ausgabe.

<sup>2</sup> Lenormant, p. 4.

The demon of the sea, the demon of the marsh,  
 The evil genius, the hand of the strong U,  
 The wind, which is evil itself,  
 The wicked demon who takes possession of the body, who  
 shakes the body.  
 Spirit of heaven, exorcise it! Spirit of the earth, exorcise  
 it!'<sup>1</sup>

'VIII. Painful fever, cruel fever,  
 Fever which tenaciously clings to man,  
 Fever which never leaves,  
 Fever which never disappears, malignant fever.  
 Spirit of heaven, exorcise it! Spirit of the earth, exorcise  
 it!'<sup>2</sup>

'XV. He who is hungry in prison,  
 He who pines of thirst in prison,  
 He who, being thrown in a ditch, helpless from hunger, is  
 forced to eat the dust,  
 He who perishes in the depth of the earth, or breathes his  
 last at the bottom of the river,  
 He who languishes in the desert,  
 He whom the sun burns in the desert,  
 The maid who does not enjoy favour in the sight of her  
 master,  
 The free woman who goes unwedded,  
 He who leaves no name,  
 He who cannot rise again from exhaustion,  
 He who falls sick and is distressed at the beginning of a  
 month which is not full.  
 Spirit of heaven, exorcise! Spirit of the earth, exorcise!'<sup>3</sup>

Besides the above-named document, from which we have  
 cited the most characteristic exorcisms, the British Museum  
 possesses fragments of a voluminous magical work found in  
 the library of the palace of Nineveh by the Assyriologist  
 Layard. This work, when complete, comprised no less than  
 two hundred clay tables with cuneiform inscriptions, and

<sup>1</sup> Lenormant, pp. 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 8, 9.

formed a collection of all the formulas of exorcism and hymns of the Chaldean magi, who, in the words of classical writers, such as Diodorus of Sicily (11, 29), 'endeavoured to avert evil and to do good partly by means of expiations, partly by sacrifices and magical resources.' The contents of these tables have been read and published by the English Orientalists, Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson and George Smith.<sup>1</sup> The magical work written on these tables consisted of three separate books. One of these books contains exclusively exorcisms and magical curses, the design of which was to drive away demons and other evil spirits, or avert their harmful action and protect from their attacks. The second book, judging by its contents, is a collection of exorcisms to which was attributed the power to heal the most various diseases. Finally, the third book contains only hymns, which were addressed to different gods, and the tenor of which, according to the faith of the Chaldeans, was to call forth supernatural and mysterious effects.<sup>2</sup>

The sentences, hymns, and exorcisms contained in all three books of the above-mentioned magical work are also written in the (most ancient) Akkadian language, and have an inter-linear Assyrian translation. The fragments, or strophes, are divided by a deep concluding line traced by the copyist on the table. Further, near every strophe stands the word 'en' 'exorcism' (in Assyrian, *sip̄tu*), which clearly marks the beginning of every fresh sentence.

The form for exorcising evil spirits is, for the most part, very monotonous, all the sentences appearing as though turned out of the same mould. First of all are enumerated the names of the wicked demons to be exorcised, and their power and actions are designated. After that usually follows the desire, expressed categorically and without any reserve, that they may be driven away, so as to be free from their persecutions. The conclusion itself (the end) consists of a

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<sup>1</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15.

mystic formula, heightening and confirming the efficacy of the exorcism: 'Spirit of heaven, exorcise them! Spirit of the earth, exorcise them!' This supplementary formula was evidently considered indispensable, and is therefore nowhere omitted. Appeals to other divine spirits are only sometimes added to the formula.<sup>1</sup> The following exorcism may serve as an illustration. It is directed against several demons of disease and other harmful influences, such as the evil eye:—

'The plague and the fever, destroyers of the land,  
The leprosy and consumption, devastators of the land,  
Are harmful to the body, destroy the inward parts.  
Wicked demons, wicked Alal, wicked Gigim,  
Wicked man, evil eye, evil word, evil tongue,  
May they avoid the body of this man, the son of his god, may  
they avoid his inward parts,  
May they never cleave to my body,  
May they never work any evil on my path,  
May they never follow me,  
May they never enter into my house,  
May they never cross the threshold of my house,  
May they never return into the house of my dwelling!  
Spirit of heaven, exorcise them!  
Spirit of the earth, exorcise them!  
Spirit Mulge (Assyrian Bel), king of the lands, exorcise them!  
Spirit Nin-Helal (Belita), mistress of the earth, exorcise them!  
Spirit Nusku (Nebo), noble messenger of Mulge, exorcise them!  
Spirit Nin-Dara (Assyrian, Adar), mighty Knight Mulge,  
exorcise them!  
Spirit Eni-Zuna (Sin), first-born of Mulge, exorcise them!  
Spirit Sukus (Istar), mistress of the camps, exorcise them!  
Spirit Mermer (Rimmon), king with a beneficial voice, exorcise  
them!  
Spirit Uttu (Samas), king of truth, exorcise them!  
Spirit of Anunna-ghe, great gods, exorcise them!'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Under the name of 'great gods' are here meant the gods who have been enumerated, and others who are not named, but understood. The Chaldeo-

The volume of the exorcising sentences is sometimes considerable, and they even take a dramatic form at the end. The description of the evil caused by the demons usually forms the principal subject of the introduction. It is also supposed that the benevolent god Silik-Mulu-Khi, who takes care of men, and is the mediator between them and the higher gods, will listen to their lamentations; but by his personal strength and wisdom, he cannot, of himself, conquer the most powerful spirits whose influence has to be exorcised. Therefore Silik-Mulu-Khi addresses himself to his father Ea, the bearer of divine knowledge (Intellect) which fills the world, to the lord of eternal mysteries who practises theurgy. Ea discloses at last the mystic rite, the magic formula or omnipotent '*mysterious name*' which is capable of frustrating all the evil devices of the most terrible infernal forces.<sup>1</sup>

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Babylonian Olympus consisted of twelve gods who occupied the highest rank in the divine hierarchy. Diodorus of Sicily, who has given a very exact statement of the Chaldean astronomic-theological system, calls them the commanders, or masters of the gods, and observes that they rule the twelve months of the year and the twelve signs of the zodiac. These twelve gods are named in the following order on certain monuments, such as the monolith of Assur-Nazi-Gabala and the obelisk of Shalmaneser in Nimrod:—

'(a) Anu, king of the earthly and heavenly archangels, and king of the world;

'(b) Bel, the father of the gods, the creator;

'(c) Ea, king of the ocean, determiner of destiny, god of wisdom and knowledge;

'(d) Sin, lord of crowns;

'(e) Bin, warrior, and lord of fertilising canals;

'(f) Samas, judge of heaven and earth;

'(g) Marudah, honourable judge of the gods, lord of birth;

'(h) Adarshamdal, a mighty commander amongst the gods of war, destroyer of evil;

'(i) Nergal, noble king of battles;

'(j) Nebo, bearer of the highest sceptre;

'(k) Belita, consort of Bel, and mother of the great gods;

'(l) Istar, the oldest above heaven and earth, shedding a lustre upon the face of the warriors' (Lenormant, *Magie*, p. 121).

<sup>1</sup> According to the Chaldean doctrine of magic, this 'name' is unknown to man. 'The great name' always remains the secret of Ea (or Hea), because, if any man were to master it, the knowledge would be the means of investing him with power before which the gods themselves would have to bow down.

The Chaldeans divided the magic profession into two branches—a sacred and a criminal one. They were convinced that the extraordinary supernatural power acquired by man through the knowledge of certain words and practices possessing magic power, proceeds either from the gods (good spirits), or from evil spirits. This was exactly in accordance with their faith in the existence of good and evil spirits. Therefore the magic power communicated by the gods is beneficial, whilst that inspired by the evil spirits is harmful, impious, and in this form turns to necromancy and witchcraft, with all other unavoidable criminal aberrations. For this reason, the sacred books, of which we possess fragments, contain, from the point of view of the Chaldeans, only exorcisms and magic sentences of the divine and beneficial type, the baneful and demoniacal portion being excluded with abhorrence and its use strictly forbidden. On the other hand, as the aim of these exorcisms was not only to paralyse (to stop or drive away) the immediate influence of the demons, but also to destroy the pernicious effects of necromancy, we find in these same books numerous indications concerning the character of necromancy. Sorcerers and witches are often mentioned in them, so that it is to be justly supposed that they abounded in Chaldea amongst the Akkadian people. Their magic conjurations are often included conjointly with demons and sickness in the enumeration of calamities which have to be exorcised, and at times they are controverted by means of peculiar adjurations. One of the sentences by which a necromancer is cursed, gives him, amongst other epithets, those of 'base evil-doer,' 'bold, wicked, evil man'; and also describes the terror which he spreads around him of the sphere of his violent attacks, his 'malice,' and 'his sorceries, which

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It is therefore not named in the dramatic part of the exorcism, when Ea is supposed to communicate it to Silik-Mulu-Khi; it is not brought into the exorcism, because the mere verbal mention of the word would be sufficient to bring on a fatal catastrophe (Lenormant, *Magie*, p. 44).

are driven far away out of the human circle.'<sup>1</sup> Ea and the god of the sun are recognised as the principal divine mediators against the wicked devices of such sorcerers; for as they practise their sorceries in the dark, the sun is considered the most powerful adversary of such evil-doers. The following lines of a hymn to the god of the sun are taken from the above-mentioned magic work:—

'Thou, who coverest a lie with shame, who destroyest an evil influence;

Thou, who turnest to naught miracles, terrible omens, interpretations, dreams, and apparitions;

Thou, who renderest vain evil wiles, who destroyest men and countries given over to witchcraft and to a wicked sorcerer . . .'<sup>2</sup>

The sorcerers are usually called by the names of 'evil-doers,' or 'wicked men,' in the ancient Akkadian exorcisms. The epithets designating their wiles and craftiness always bear a peculiar mysterious character, showing the horror they inspired. Nobody dares to pronounce those names openly, and it is only in some passages of the Assyrian translation that such terms have a definite signification. In general the necromancer's exorcisms may be defined as the calling forth of misfortunes (literally, 'effects'), evil, oppression (subjection of the will); and the customary rites for accomplishing them were called the 'act,' the conjuration='the word,' the magic drinks='a thing which has a mortal effect.'<sup>3</sup>

In a word, there was no evil which a necromancer was incapable of causing. Sorcery practised by means of the evil eye, or an ill-omened word, is considered a wizard's favourite occupation; his wiles and incantations force the demons to obey his orders; he instigates them against the individual whom he intends to harm, and he makes them persecute and harass him in every possible way; he casts a

<sup>1</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, pp. 68, 69.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 70.

spell over men and whole countries, and causes diseases and demoniacal possessions. He can even cause death by the force of his conjurations and curses, or by the poison which he mixes with his magic drinks.<sup>1</sup>

A curse was, however, considered the most powerful and invincible instrument of the 'wicked man' planning destruction. The formulas of curses, according to the Chaldean creed, not only let the demons loose, but also influenced the gods in heaven, whose words and actions became invested with a baneful power. The god who, according to the Chaldeans, was intrusted with the guidance of every separate man was transformed into a servile executor of their will, and his beneficial power was turned into enmity. This idea

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<sup>1</sup> We find an interesting illustration of the necromancer's pernicious influence in the narrative of a Mesopotamian writer (Kutami) about a theft by a sorcerer of thirty cows from the king's herd in Chaldea during the reign of one of the Arabian or Canaanite kings:—"I was told," says the author, "that a sorcerer, whose name I will leave unmentioned, an adept of Ssinata's teaching, which he considered superior to any other magic lore, took away by witchcraft thirty cows from the king's flocks, which grazed in Bakurati in the circuit of Kuta-Riia, so that the shepherds and watchmen never noticed the disappearance of the cattle." Here the author interrupts his narrative and tells a long tale about the same sorcerer, who, as somebody had told him, had cleared the neighbourhood of the Suva from lions which ravaged the place, having daily destroyed three and four lions by means of his witchcraft, and, having allured an enormous lion, rendered him harmless and let him go free. After this the author returns to the former history of the theft of the thirty cows from the king's herd, and continues his narrative as follows:—"When the royal shepherds noticed the disappearance of the thirty cows, they reported it to the stewards, who reported it to the chief steward, and he, in his turn, informed the king. The king was terribly angry, and called the principal men of Kuta-Riia and said: "If you will not put aside your malice against me, which you also had against my father . . . I will have you all put to death. Why did you not treat your own kings in the same manner? Ever since we have reigned over you, we have seen your enmity, which shows itself by your craftiness and your robberies. Give my cows back immediately, as if not, I will kill all the Chaldeans in this land." "I swear by Jupiter," exclaimed he at last, "that if you do not give back my cows, I will condemn to death ten of your most illustrious and powerful men in exchange for every cow." Then appeared before the king a certain Saruka, the possessor of vast lands and many slaves, and he swore by Jupiter that they knew nothing of the lost cows, and that they had no wish to anger the king. "As to the theft of the cows," said Saruka, "I



is very clearly expressed in the following fragments, representing, in a poetic form, the consequences of the curse which these conjurations aimed at paralysing :—

‘ Vile curse, it acts on man like a wicked demon.

The word of the curse hangs over him.

The word of perdition weighs upon him.

Vile curse, it is the witchcraft which has called forth madness.

Vile curse, this man, like a lamb, is oppressed by it.

His god has left his inward parts ; his goddess, having grown angry, has taken up her abode elsewhere.

The thundering voice envelopes him like a veil.

Casts him to the ground with its ringing force.

Silik-Mulu-Khi hastens to his rescue.

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have some suspicion whence it comes ; and, if the king in his mercy will give me a day's time, I will produce all the lost cows." " You wish perhaps," replied the king, " to give me your own cows instead of mine, but I swear by the sun that I will only take those which have been stolen from me." " I submit to your orders," said Saruka, " and will bring you the same cows, only I implore the king not to ask any more questions, because," added he, " the sorcerers are capable of things such as we shall never be able to set right." The king understood the hint, guessed that sorcerers, and not thieves, had committed the theft, and was seized by a great fear. He ordered Saruka to take the necessary measures for the recovery of the lost cows, and promised not to ask more of him. Then Saruka went home and took a sum of one thousand denarii, coined in the time of Nimrod, father of the Canaanite king Zamima, whose thirty cows had been stolen. He then went to the sorcerer, whose name I cannot reveal, as has already been said, and entreated and persuaded him to take the money and give back the cows. The sorcerer consented, and the shepherds of Saruka returned the cows to the king's shepherds. The king was so afraid of the sorcerer's anger that he never said a word more, because, as is said further, it was no use killing one sorcerer, or even several, as there would have still remained many others, and therefore the king thought it more expedient to leave them in peace. This mutual hatred between the Canaanites and the Chaldeans, adds the author at the end, ' is very ancient, and springs from the time when this country, Babylonia, was not yet under the dominion of the Canaanites, whose cruel hatred of the Chaldeans is a fact well known to all nations. The Canaanites hate the Chaldeans for the knowledge with which the gods have endowed them, and in which they themselves are deficient' (Chwolson, D., *Newly-discovered Monuments of Ancient Babylonian Inscriptions*, *Russkii Vestnik* (*Russian Messenger*), 1859, pp. 185-187). According to the authoritative assertion of Chwolson, Kutami wrote this narrative in the fourteenth century B.C. (see page 204 of the above-mentioned journal).

He has entered the dwelling of his father Ea, and has called him :—

“Father ! the vile curse acts upon this man like a wicked demon.”

Another time he said to him :—

“What this man does, he knows not ;

By what means will he be cured ?”

Ea answered his son Silik-Mulu-Khi :—

“My son ! what is it that you do not know, what must I teach you ?

What I know, you know just as well ;

However, come to me, my son Silik-Mulu-Khi.

Stretch out your hand to him from the height of this luminous dwelling,

Destroy the evil fate, deliver him from his evil destiny,

Whatever be the disease, which gnaws his inward parts,

Be it the curse of his father,

The curse of his mother,

The curse of his eldest brother,

Or even the curse of some stranger,

By the magic ‘word,’ which Ea pronounces,

May the evil lot be taken away, as the peel from off an onion,

Fall to pieces like a date,

Be disentangled like a knot.”

Evil destiny—Spirit of heaven, exorcise it !

Spirit of the earth, exorcise it !’<sup>1</sup>

These different forms of conjurations and curses all depended from the peculiar religious perceptions of the inhabitants of Mesopotamia. The characteristic features of their creed were the following :—The most ancient inhabitants of Chaldea and Mesopotamia believed that the whole universe was divided into three spheres : heaven, earth, and the subterranean world. Each was supposed to be inhabited by spirits. At the head of the spirits of heaven, as their parent and sovereign, was the god Anu. The god Ea, or Hea, stood at the head of the spirits of the earth ; and Mul-ge, or Ellim,<sup>2</sup> was honoured as

<sup>1</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, pp. 74, 75.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 166.

the chief of the spirits of the subterranean world. Innumerable spirits, having a definite form, are diffused everywhere in nature, and exist either separately or conjointly with the objects which they animate. By their nature they are divided into good and evil spirits. In the same way as man uses the forces of nature according to his intellect and necessities, so do these immaterial beings take an active part in the correlation of the forces of nature, and in the direction and distribution of the elements. They guide the course of the planets, change the seasons of the year, influence the winds and the rain, impart fertility to the soil, call forth every manifestation of vital force, and also send illness and death.<sup>1</sup> In accordance with their different natures, some spirits bring good and strive to maintain the harmony of the universe, whilst others do their utmost to bring all possible harm and disorder into the world. These two contrasting groups of good and evil spirits form a great opposition embracing the whole universe, and carry on an unceasing struggle in all parts of creation.<sup>2</sup> Evil spirits raise commotions, perturbations in the movements of the planets, injurious atmospherical phenomena; they penetrate unhindered into houses, drive away the masters, attack whole countries one after the other. Their invasions were principally expected from wild and desolate places, from the summits of mountains, and from impassable marshes reeking with miasma.<sup>3</sup> The ancient inhabitants of Mesopotamia and Chaldea lived in constant fear of these beings. The slightest noise, any unforeseen misfortune in family life, any unexpected attack by a strange people, called forth a double terror. In the most insignificant sound, in the rustle of leaves, in the cries of animals, the Chaldean was always inclined to see a bad omen, or the persecution of an evil spirit. The so-called sacred art of magic was, in their eyes, a constant safeguard against such

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<sup>1</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 154.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 41, 42.

evil influences of the demons; it had been revealed by the god of wisdom, Ea, under the forms of exorcisms, propitiatory and mystical rites, and enchanted talismans.<sup>1</sup> All these effects and practices received their sanction only from the supreme gods—the spirit of heaven (Anu) and the spirit of the earth (Ea). The mysterious nature of Anu, the god of heaven, was beyond the comprehension of earth-born creatures; but they felt the beneficial and omnipotent power of Anu, and expressed this feeling by their belief that this highest, this invincible, power rests in the mysterious divine name, ‘*the great name*,’ ‘*the highest name*,’ known only to the god Ea. All that is in heaven, on earth, and beneath the earth bows down before this name; it alone has the power of suppressing evil spirits and of putting a limit to their devastations. It even lays fetters on the higher rank of spirits—the gods—and impels them to submission.<sup>2</sup> Ea, or Hea, the spirit of the earth, and its good providence, is assisted by this ‘name’ in maintaining the order, which the evil spirits do their utmost to disturb. Silik-Mulu-Khi is the mediator between Ea and mankind. He is the guardian of peace and order, the hater of strife and confusion.<sup>3</sup>

The magic art constituted in Egypt, no less than in Chaldea, an essential part of the religious condition; but Egypt was the cradle from whence, with Chaldea, the art of magic spread to other nations which derived their culture from the Egyptians.<sup>4</sup> Popular traditions and written chronicles

<sup>1</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, pp. 166, 167.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> We find the part attributed to Silik-Mulu-Khi mentioned in many passages of the previously mentioned work on magic found in the library of the palace of Nineveh (cf. Troitzky, J., *Religious, Social, and Political Condition of the Hebrews at the Time of the Judges*, p. 98).

<sup>4</sup> Lenormant says, in his preface to the French edition of the work cited by us, *Magie et Mantik*, that ‘the unanimous testimony of classical antiquity, as well as Hebrew and Arabian traditions, call Egypt and Chaldea the cradles of magic and astrology, which had been raised in those countries to the degree of sciences by means of strict rules theoretically established and systematically regulated, so that these sciences replaced, in course of time, the ancient foretellers and sorcerers who practised their art without almost any scientific basis’ (p. ix).

on monuments attribute to Egypt the principal part in the discovery and propagation of white and black (beneficial and prejudicial) magic.<sup>1</sup> As the belief in a future existence beyond the grave was a point of central importance in the Egyptian religious creed, a part of Egyptian exorcisms is devoted to the defence of the dead from attacks in the regions of death, and such exorcisms are to be found in the so-called 'book of the dead.' Another part was employed as a safeguard against dangers occurring in everyday life, and against attacks of ferocious animals. A collection of such exorcisms forms the so-named papyrus (roll) of Harris.

One of them, designed as a defence against the crocodile, says:—

'Do not be against me.  
I am Ammon, I am Abhur, a merciful guard.  
I am a great leader, the owner of a sword.  
Do not rise any more,  
I am Mont.  
Do not lull my vigilance,  
I am Set . . .'<sup>1</sup>

Such are the general features and characteristic points of the Egyptian and Chaldean magic; and we have full reason for asserting that it was practised in the same manner by the other nations, and among others the Moabites, who lived in close proximity to Egypt and Chaldea. Therefore, when Balak spoke of the efficacy of the blessing and curse of Balaam, he had in view precisely those exorcisms and curses for which the Chaldean magi, and Balaam as one of them, were famous. If the sacred historian gives the name of blessings to Balaam's exorcisms, he does not apply the word in its proper signification; perhaps because these adjurations,

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<sup>1</sup> See Schabas, *Le Papyrus Magique de Harris*, p. 155; Savvaitzky, M. J., *The Departure from Egypt*, p. 40.

which were a perverted form of blessing, were unknown to the chosen people, and they probably had no special name by which to define a magic exorcism. These practices, which are a fundamental feature of the art of magic, are, moreover, quite out of unison with the doctrine of Revelation; for they assume the power of a person, by means of the mysterious art, or by witchcraft, to act arbitrarily, independently of the commandments of God, and to enlist in his service for the attainment of earthly temporal aims<sup>1</sup> the forces of immaterial (heavenly) spirits and the elements of nature.

§ 4. Therefore, from all that has been stated in reference to the question as to the species of curse and blessing that Balak expected from the soothsayer Balaam, it may be concluded that the king of Moab had in view the magic curses and exorcisms for which Mesopotamia was at that period famous. Hence necessarily arises another question as to the difference in substance and signification which exists between a true blessing and a true curse, and their mutilated forms, known under the name of magic exorcisms and curses.

The difference is really great, and can be brought out very distinctly by comparing the above given sketch of ancient magic with the history and nature of the biblical blessings and curses. Namely, the blessings of the holy patriarchs and prophets of the chosen people in the sense of a kind of (religious) act (which has already been explained) signified a *solicitation* for the Almighty to bestow *every good* upon those who are blessed. From this it follows that the result of such an act means that every gift is sent down to man from God.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, the magic exorcism 'en,' that is, 'divine protection,' evidently represents by the meaning of the expression only a condition (an instrument) by which the co-operation of the highest power is sought in order to avert

<sup>1</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, pp. 80-85.

<sup>2</sup> In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter ix. verse 5, every gift or bounty of the rich to the poor is called, in the original text, blessing.

temporary or impending calamities.<sup>1</sup> The blessing was a living word, a prophecy of God's mercy, a promise of reward for piety, coming from the lips of some holy man (a prophet). The conjuration (magic blessing) was a kind of song, which, once composed, never changed (a combination of mystic words); it was a persistent demand for assistance from above in case of misfortune; and was quite independent of the moral worth of the individual in whose favour the exorcism was pronounced.

Patriarchal blessings proceeded purely from a moral source, and had nothing to do with any danger or suffering impending

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<sup>1</sup> The exorcism was always addressed to the highest gods, and principally to the gods of good, light, and warmth. Its aim and subject are always centred in the wish to be delivered from psychical and bodily sicknesses proceeding from the influences of evil spirits and wicked men, or caused by the elements and natural phenomena. In this respect the exorcisms have a certain resemblance to prayers and psalms. The ideogram of the Akkadian 'ên' consists in the fusion of the letters 'sû' and 'an,' of which the former expressed an idea of 'union' and 'defence,' and the latter the idea of 'God.' Thus the fundamental meaning of this fusion stands in relationship to the same idea, θεῶν ἀνάγκη, of the neoplatonical theurgy (Lenormant, *Magic*, p. 16, note 1). This is usually considered the science, or knowledge, of entering into communication with the gods, and of accomplishing with their help different supernatural actions or miracles. Theurgy taught the art not only of entering into communication with the gods, but also of, so to say, laying hold of them, of taking them into one's service, of calling them out at pleasure, and obliging them to act in a certain way. The means by which these results were attained consisted of different sacrifices, exorcisms, of certain rites, ceremonies, and other mysterious acts and symbols. All these acts are efficacious in themselves, not by the force of the ideas with which they are associated. They stimulate the strength of the gods without mediation, even in the case where their performer knows nothing of their signification and connects them with no special representation. The symbols and ceremonies exercise an irresistible influence and magical force upon the gods, and oblige them even to act against their own will according to the desire of the theurgist (see Krassin, *Works of Saint Augustine: De civitate dei*, Kazan, 1873, pp. 85-95). Witchcraft and sorcery, which are also sometimes called 'curses,' were practised by the power and with the aid of lower divinities, principally evil. Their aim was exclusively to cause injury to mankind for the satisfaction of their base inclinations, e.g. to seize on the property, or even the body and soul, of a certain individual. Witchcraft also consisted of peculiar repugnant proceedings enveloped in the darkness of awe and of abominable rites, ceremonials, conjurations, and evil words (see Lenormant, *Magic*, p. 70).

at the moment. Conjurations, on the contrary, depended exclusively on special temporary manifestations of evil, such as invasions of enemies, drought, pestilence, diseases. A blessing was given in the name of the One true God and by His inspiration; a conjuration, on the contrary, was pronounced in the name of false gods, and was used by the cupidity of the magi as a means of satisfying the superstitious desire of those who hoped to be saved by the exorcism from any impending misfortune.

The curse of the holy patriarchs differed in the same manner from that of the magi. The holy men of the Church of God cursed either a separate individual, or a family, or a whole nation, by the divine power, and as a punishment for the violation of the divine commandments. The curses and exorcisms of the heathens were uttered by wicked sorcerers and wizards merely out of malice, envy, or shameful cupidity, and not in the least with the object of punishing iniquity. The holy patriarchs committed the fulfilment of their curse to the will of the Lord Almighty, whilst sorcerers and soothsayers (Isa. viii. 19; Deut. xviii. 10) expected the desired results of their magical curses from the power of their incantations. To bless and to curse in a biblical sense means to pray fervently to the Lord to bestow good or evil, to reward or punish; but, in the heathen sense, to force an evil, or divine, power to accomplish some desired object.

§ 5. Hence it is evident that the difference between biblical blessings and curses and magic ones is as great as that between the genuine and the counterfeit. But why was Balak so firmly persuaded of the power of the blessings (adjurations) and curses of the soothsayer Balaam? Was there, in fact, or might there be, anything real or helpful in the difficult moments of life in these mutilated forms? Did Balaam really possess any wonderful capacity of inspiring the Moabites with courage and military valour; and could he, by means of his exorcisms, plunge the Israelites into a state of moral



prostration, panic, and paralysing indecision, which rendered them indifferent to their interests and duties even in face of their enemies?

This question remains an open one to this day. The majority of the commentators of the Bible are disposed to think that magic and other manifestations of the religious life of the heathen are nothing but impostures and counterfeits of the manifestations of the true God, groundless fragments of the ancient monotheistical idea. Others, without denying the reality of the results obtained by magic, do not find sufficient foundation to acknowledge the authenticity of current opinions as to the benefit or harmfulness of magic. The following classical citation from the words of the Roman writer Pliny may serve as an example of a similar point of view:—‘There is still a great question which remains till now unsolved, viz., “Are magic words and formulas endowed with power?” It is true that the personal convictions of all sensible persons are opposed to this belief; but, in general, practical life in every period firmly holds to it, without regarding its denial by the wise.’ ‘As to this debatable point,’ continues Pliny, ‘our ancestors always nourished this conviction (in the affirmative sense), and did not consider it impossible to call forth the most difficult manifestations, such as the calling down of lightning, as has already been mentioned in its place.’ In the first book of his *Annals*, Caius Lucius Piso states that ‘the king Tullus Hostilius tried, according to the rules of Numa and by means of the same ceremonies, to bring down Jupiter from heaven; but as he had not exactly fulfilled some indispensable ceremonies, he was killed by the lightning. Many authors say that the destinies of powerful countries, and the importance of the omens connected with them, can be altered by the force of some magical words.’<sup>1</sup> We find the same hesitation as to the

<sup>1</sup> Plinius, *Hist. Natur.* 18, etc.; cf. Hartung, *Relig. der Röm.*, vol. i. p. 103.

reality of exorcisms and magic in general in the writings of the fathers of the Church: 'On the one hand they speak of these miracles and prophecies as impostures and delusions; on the other they admit the reality of some special manifestations, which surpass human power, and explain them as due to demoniacal influence. It happens very often that both opinions are expressed side by side by the same author, and one cannot say that they are altogether incompatible.'<sup>1</sup>

There exists to this very day in scientific circles the same indefinite view as to the genuineness of the extraordinary manifestations of magic; this is quite comprehensible on account of the limited number of trustworthy and exact testimonies which have reached us from ancient times. It is true that the important position which magic lore occupied in the life of the ancient heathen nations is a certain guarantee of the authenticity of its supernatural manifestations; for, in reality, the place it has taken up in the human history of ancient times is such as to exclude any possibility of regarding it as a continuous system of skilful imposture. It was appealed to not only by the common people, but by the wise and learned; therefore, however superstitious the people of antiquity may have been, however great their need of the intercession of the spirit world, still, if there had not been some palpable results of these practices, magic could not have occupied such a prominent place in the social life of the ancients. Magic and astrology have exercised during whole millenniums, even up to the present day, a deep and serious influence upon the majority of mankind. This influence must undoubtedly have been founded on facts more or less real; for the heathen world has, generally speaking, always lived a carnal and utilitarian life, and only appreciated transactions which were the source of actual tangible welfare. On the other hand, this prominent and influential position of necromancy

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Chrysanthus, *Religions of the Ancient World*, vol. iii. pp. 574-579.

in the ancient world is yet far from being a sufficient proof of the reality of its manifestations. Magic might have also existed on a purely subjective foundation in virtue of an inextinguishable hope of divine assistance in time of need through the mediation of magi and augurs, 'whose importance in the eyes of men increased in proportion to the power they attributed to their conjurations, so that at last they were thought capable of obtaining any good or misfortune they liked by means of their superstitious rites.'<sup>1</sup> However, in latter years, medical science has observed in the life of some individuals certain circumstances and effects, which, by the similarity of conditions and in several essential features, are almost identical with the magic manifestations known to us through the monuments of antiquity. For this reason it has been asserted by several investigators of nervous diseases, and particularly of hypnotism, that the enigmatical and apparently improbable facts of ancient witchcraft and sorcery are nothing but unusual hypnotic manifestations which must be classified under the category of 'mental suggestion,' and attributed to the immediate influence of one mind over the other.<sup>2</sup> In fact,

<sup>1</sup> De Geer, *Dissert.* p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> This opinion concerning the magic lore of the ancients is a current one amongst the investigators of hypnotism (see Wundt, *Hypnotism and Suggestion*, translation from German into Russian by Kolubovskoy, Moscow, 1893). Several theologians were of the same opinion even earlier, about thirty years ago. The Protestant theologian Kurtz (see Kurtz, *Geschichte des Alten Bundes*, Bd. ii. pp. 91-94, 3te Aufl. 1864) says: 'The art of magic, taken from the point of view of time, and of the persons who were addicted to its practice, was a capacity (acquired by study, or inherited) of subjecting to its will, by means of a mysterious art, or witchcraft, the forces of the supra-mundane spirits or gods, with the aim, either of penetrating that which is generally concealed from human knowledge (mantology), or of doing that which is impossible to the ordinary human will (operative magic or theurgy). Three different ways are open for the explanation of the phenomena, handed down to us by authentic historical data as magic manifestations. The first is to consider the whole as superstition and credulity, which is the road traced principally by the latest exponents of deism and rationalism, and advanced in particular by Balthazar Bekker in his work, *The Spellbound World* (*Die Betoverde Weereld*, i. 4, Bock, Amsterdam, 1691-94), but this method may now be considered out of date. The second way is to accept

a great similarity is to be observed between contemporary hypnotism and ancient magic, at least as far as concerns the forms

the magic phenomena to be true, and to recognise in them the influence of supramundane good and evil spirits, whence proceeded the difference between black and white magic. White magic was considered as intentionally proceeding from God or His angels or saints, through prayer, asceticism, words, or mysterious acts; whilst black magic was the work of Satan and his demons. The whole of heathen magic was therefore naturally attributed to Satan. This issue was the one which inspired most confidence to the rabbis and fathers of the Church, and was accepted by the synagogue and the Church till the epoch of (German) enlightenment. *The third method adopted for the solution of these enigmatical facts consists in the explanation of these phenomena by the action of some mysterious forces of nature, which have not yet been sufficiently investigated by science, but which are inherent and innate to the human spirit. They consist partly in the power of the human spirit over nature, partly in the peculiar influence of one spirit over another. In usual everyday life these forces slumber in the depths of the human soul, enveloped and confined by the fetters and obstacles of the outward material life. But there are moments and conditions, as during illness, or at the approach of death, when some of them occur involuntarily, whilst others are called forth purposely by outward effects; when these obstacles are removed, the veil which covers the soul is uplifted, the slumbering hidden force of the spirit awakens and moves free and unshackled in the regions of contemplation and knowledge, desires and actions, which are closed to it in healthy, normal, material life.* Since the time when mesmerism opened our eyes to the enigmatic region of second sight, and called forth phenomena largely coinciding with the manifestations of ancient magic, the above-named last solution of the problem has found many friends and defenders. Owing to this, the magical manifestations of the ancients, and those mentioned in the history of the Middle Ages, were no more regarded as empty fancies, or melancholy aberrations of the human spirit. On the contrary, they were looked on rather in the light of a long series of deep presentiments of a certain knowledge, which is only now beginning to be unravelled—a series of anticipations of the reality of the human spirit, which will only fully come to light in the conditions of a perfect existence beyond the grave, when the spirit will soar, loosed from its carnal fetters. This is the fundamental point of view, which serves as a basis to the work of J. Ennemoser, *Geschichte der Magie* (volume one of his *Geschichte des Magnetismus*, 2te Aufl., Leipzig, 1844, p. 1001). Several modes of proceeding are necessary for the explanation of heathen magic in particular, and all the three methods above referred to have sometimes to be used. ‘Much less often do we refer the mysterious magic phenomena to imposture, and intentional crafty practices, and the less so as we go back farther into antiquity. Therefore we have the more right to admit the existence and co-operation of imposture, as we move away from the period of immediate pagan life, and come nearer to the life of abstraction and reflex action; and the farther we leave behind us the time when the heathen period flourished in its prime, the nearer we approach the epoch when its power was shattered, when it looks death in the face, and, instead

of conjuration and curses. Magic was practised in antiquity by special persons, magi, who were at the same time priests

of a strong and invigorating odour, sends forth the miasma of decomposition and decay' (Kurtz, *Geschichte des Alten Bundes*, Bd. ii. pp. 91, 92). As, according to heathenism, magic was connected with the gods, the explanation of magic necessarily demands the solution of the question of the reality of the heathen gods. The problem can be solved by the following data:—

The reality of evil spirits, their corrupting influence on human souls, and their debilitating effects on the human body (see *Dogmatic Theology* of Philaret, Archbishop of Tchernigoff, i. pp. 152-156, 162-164, 168, 169, 170-172).

The testimony of the Holy Scriptures, which certify to the reality of the heathen gods (Exod. xii. 12, xv. 11, xviii. 11; Deut. x. 17; Ps. lxxxvi. 8, xc. 3, 4, xcvi. 9, cxxxv. 5), although their divinity is denied (Ps. xcvi. 5; 1 Chron. xvi. 25, 26; 1 Cor. viii. 4, 5, x. 19-21).

Finally, the traditional identification by the Israelite prophets and scribes of the heathen gods with the devils (cf. the translation of the Septuagint, Deut. xxxii. 17; Ps. cvi. 37, xcvi. 5; Exod. xv. 11; Acts xvi. 16; 1 Cor. x. 20, 21, viii. 4, 5), although there are no direct indications to be found in the Holy Scriptures that the mythological world of gods was identical with the objective world of devils.

From the testimony of Holy Scripture one can only be convinced: 'That the heathen cult was not void of a real object, that every homage paid to a heathen deity reaches an existing personal supramundane power, and is received by it in the same proportion in which the heathen commits himself to such a personal power by means of his cult, in that same degree is he met by and does he enter into essential communion with it. According to the testimony of the Apostle Paul, the sacrifice offered by the heathens is a sacrifice to devils; the sacrifice is offered to the deity, but *de facto* it is offered to the demon, to God's enemy, to a nonentity, and he who offers the sacrifice enters into communion with devils, as a Christian approaching the Lord's table enters into communion with the Lord' (Kurtz, p. 90). Another argument may be added to this point of view as to the nature and substance of the world of heathen gods and their worship, as conducive to elucidating the mysteries of heathen magic. There are three spheres from whence can proceed the extraordinary and wonderful knowledge and actions of man: the life in God and with God, communion with devils, and, last of all, an innate magic power of one's own spirit over nature and spirit. The latter represents a sphere capable of being the bearer and intermediary of knowledge and actions either springing from a divine or diabolical source; but, of course, it also possesses the capacity, under favourable circumstances, in certain limits, and by its own intuition, of breaking through obstacles of time or space, and subjecting by means of its (persistent) wish and action (action of the will) the power (usual degree of energy) of ordinary everyday life. This, however, never occurs in a healthy normal condition of the corporeal and spiritual (sensitive life), and only takes place in moments when the normal relations of the one to the other are transgressed by momentary conditions more or less violent and unnatural. In the usual normal and healthy disposition of everyday life, the capacity of such intui-

and doctors.<sup>1</sup> The enigmatic and mysterious phenomena of hypnotism in the present day are also principally studied and demonstrated by medical men. The magic words pronounced by the magi were accompanied by different superstitious rites or magic operations;<sup>2</sup> and modern hypnotisers have likewise had recourse to various means by which they induce hypnotism

tion and action (influence) lies compressed and concealed in the innermost part of our soul in the form of a slumbering fettered potency (capacity). There is little doubt that this capacity, as far as it is innate to man, has been destined to develop and come to light even in this life. Therefore it is no less certain that even now, after the fall of Adam, and by the force of the decree of the redemption, it may and must attain its full development and manifestation not here, but only in another life. At present this potency is bound (like latent heat) and locked away by the beneficial will of God; because, owing to the sinfulness inherent to humanity, its revelation might prove destructive, anti-divine, and therefore against nature. Every arbitrary and independent attempt to overthrow the obstacles by which this capacity is guarded, every effort to break or dissolve the close union existing between body and soul, and thus open the abyss from which it can escape, will always be absolutely impious and against nature, be it the result of the soporific vapour which rose from the Delphian cave, or of the stupefying, poisonous drink prepared from the crimson fly-Agaric by the Shamanist (Siberian sorcerer), be it by means of fixing the eye upon a bright metal plate, or contemplating the navel of the omphalopsychists, or of a doctor carrying on condemnable magnetic experiments beyond the limit ascribed to medical science, or any other remedy, by which the clearness of external self-consciousness is forcibly dimmed. Therefore, when these manifestations do take place, the authenticity of their revelations must not be relied upon, nor the morality of these energetic effects. Such a prophecy may be either false or true, and its effects may prove harmful and ruinous, or useful and necessary, for so-called natural magic is still unnatural and impious in its foundation. These experiments are always dangerous in a double respect, because, in the first place, a man loses control over his self-consciousness; and because, in the second, he cannot know how far he will be carried away by the force of his soul, liberated and deprived of direction, cannot foresee to what strange, dark, and hostile forces he may have openly and defencelessly given himself up. Beyond doubt evil, malignant, and fraudulent intellects have been at play in many of the heathen oracles (sentences) and some of the manifestations of the modern somnambulistical Pythias (cf. ix. H. V., Schubert, *Zaubereisünden*, viii. p. 38); and the Greenland Shamanists, after becoming sincere converts to Christianity, avowed that many of their magical artifices were impostures, but that one of them contained a spiritual element which, though they now truly abominated, they could not describe (Krantz's *Grönland*, i. p. 273).

<sup>1</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, pp. 37, 38; J. Troitzky, *Relig. Social and Polit. Condition of the Hebrews at the Time of the Judges*, pp. 136, 137.

<sup>2</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, pp. 19, 42, 72.

(artificial slumber) and hypnotic manifestations. They make use of passes, fixation, verbal suggestion (order), monotonous sounds, and, in general, processes which are not only disproportionate (as causes) to the effects they call forth, such as catalepsy, paralysis, etc., but also strange in themselves; for hypnotic manifestations, being the result of a comparatively insignificant cause, can also be instantaneously dispelled by equally insignificant means (the will of the experimenter). This is never observed in the case of ordinary ailments, upon which the will of the doctor has no such remarkable effect.<sup>1</sup> Judging by the testimony and allusions contained in works upon magic, it appears that some of the magi and sorcerers provided protection from disasters and misfortunes, and evoked evil spells by means of conjurations (exorcisms) and curses (adjurations), similar in tone to the imperious suggestion of the hypnotiser. The application of such means in particular cases aroused in some individuals boldness, energy, hope of success in any undertaking, insured the desired sympathy of some necessary personage, or cured diseases such as leprosy, pest, fever, consumption, etc., and, in a word, averted the harmful influence of some evil power, and attracted every kind of welfare depending upon the beneficial forces of nature. In other cases, these actions caused harm to those against whom they were directed. They aroused presentiments of evil, occasioned weakness, apathy, loss of memory, a numb terror (paralysis of the will), anguish, demoniacal possession, madness, aberration of vision (things being seen in deceptive forms), uncontrollable attraction towards some person, and various bodily sicknesses.<sup>2</sup> In the same manner, the hypnotic suggestion

<sup>1</sup> See Hotynsky, *Sorcery and Mysterious Phenomena*, pp. 92-97; Giliarov, *Hypnotism*, pp. 77-150.

<sup>2</sup> See Lenormant, *Magie*, pp. 69, 70, 74, 75; Afanassiev, *Witchcraft in Russia in Ancient Times*, pp. 57, 58; *Journal Severniy Viestnik* (Northern Messenger), 1890, book v. article of Ponomarev. The Greco-Roman writers mention cases of subjection of the will, suppression of feelings, and dimness of consciousness in consequence of magic exorcisms and curses.

of an experienced and clever physician-hypnotiser produces complete insensibility of the body in the hypnotised person, so that he may be cut, pricked, burned, etc., without pain. It also causes weakened receptivity of the visual and auditory organs, makes the subject answer questions in his sleep, and accomplishes a whole series of actions without being able to account for them, causes him to remain unconscious of all that is going on, and oblivious of time, place, and even of his own self. In particular cases, the result of 'suggestion' by means of actions, objects, and words is manifested, according to the wish of the hypnotiser, by a particular kind of pleasure or suffering, by hiccough, yawning, fainting-fits, tetanus, convulsions, extraordinary movements, a comical and sometimes repulsive or terrible expression of the face, and various postures of the body, and sometimes by an unconquerable attraction to a person designated by the hypnotiser.<sup>1</sup> The person hypnotised experiences the same fatal necessity as one bewitched of yielding to the idea (image or notion) which has entered into his consciousness; his will is paralysed; he feels incapable of struggling against the suggestion; his memory is confused; the kernel of his personality is, so to say, shattered; his consciousness more or less dimmed; and, although he appears

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Salmasius proves by citations, taken from ancient authors, in his work, *Exerc. Plin.* p. 766, that 'the words "to fasten," "to render immovable," "to benumb," "to chain," "to bind," are all proper to the art of magic.' According to his testimony, if any one is prevented by some magic influence from acting as he wishes, or stopped by some impediment in the fulfilment of a natural function, such a person must consider himself rendered immovable (*defixus*), or bound, no matter whether it is by the action of a herb, or by the influence of a word, without using bonds or knots. And on page 768 he says: 'The words "doom to destruction," "chain," "bind," belong to the art of magic, which so darkens the soul by means of its conjurations, supplications, curses, herbs, evil eye, that the person accursed loses all control over himself, and he is unable to think of his duties or attend to his natural occupations' (De Geer, *Dissert.* p. 32).

<sup>1</sup> Hotynsky, *Witchcraft*, p. 94; Wundt, *Hypnotism and Suggestion*, pp. 12-17. Translation from the German by N. Kolubovskoy, printed in the journal *Voprosy Filosofii i Psichologii* ('Questions of Philosophy and Psychology'), 1893.



conscious of the actions which he performs in this condition, in reality they are forgotten by him as soon as there is a return to a natural state, and seem as though they had never been accomplished. The authoritative word of the hypnotiser suggests, like the sentences of the magi, illusions and hallucinations in the domain of inward self-consciousness and organic feelings; creates sensations which previously never existed; changes the views of the hypnotised person as to his own personality, that is to say, compels him to consider himself another man, a peasant, a soldier, or even an animal; awakens arbitrarily in his soul unconquerable attractions and inclinations; and obliges him during sleep, after sleep, or after a determined space of time, to automatically carry out given orders.<sup>1</sup> Finally, a parallel can be drawn between the chronicles of the ancients concerning the healing power of the magi and their wonderful cures of various diseases, and the annals of modern history, which certify that, since the time of Mesmer, skilful hypnotisers have frequently cured by suggestion the most dangerous and incurable illnesses,<sup>2</sup> and have equally occasioned harm, both bodily and spiritual, by instigating the hypnotised person to commit all possible crimes.<sup>3</sup> According to the belief of the ancients, exorcisms and curses had the power of influencing the will of whole communities and nations by successive transmissions of a peculiar frame of mind from one individual to another, just as contemporary occultism gives us examples of collective hallucinations or general impulses.<sup>4</sup> The great influence of magic has been partly attributed to the blind faith of the heathens in the power which the magi possessed of performing extraordinary actions; those who practise hypnotism

<sup>1</sup> Hotynsky, *Witchcraft*, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> Svetlov, 'Mysticism at the end of the Nineteenth Century,' journal *Strannik* ('The Wanderer'), Jan. 1895, pp. 67, 68; *Voprossy Filosofii i Psichologii* ('Questions of Philosophy and Psychology'), 1893, Book 8th, pp. 140-142, 145, 146.

<sup>3</sup> Bony, *Hypnotism*, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> This brings to mind cases of general panic.

also declare that hypnotical phenomena cannot be produced, nor, above all, the human will subjected to the suggestion of the hypnotiser, unless the subject thoroughly believes in the power of hypnotism in general, and has implicit confidence in the person of the hypnotiser in particular. In addition to this, it is also absolutely necessary that the habits, prevailing inclinations, wishes, faith of the subject, should be in harmony with the views of the hypnotiser.<sup>1</sup> The magi and soothsayers performed their exorcisms and curses as near as possible to the object of their magic suggestions, and the most skilful hypnotisers of our time can only succeed in obtaining extraordinary manifestations with persons in close proximity to them.<sup>2</sup> We can even observe in casual features how astonishing is this resemblance between the manifestations of hypnotism and the '*wonderfulness*' of ancient magic, an expression used by the late Bishop Theophanus of Tambov in the explanation of chapter xii. of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Namely, just as antiquity tells us of but few convincing beneficial or harmful manifestations of magic, so are also the cases of the cures or baneful effects of hypnotism comparatively rare, being for the most part limited to a few hospitals, and referring solely to weak and impressionable natures. The ancient chronicles have transmitted to us but very few names of magi as having been healers of diseases, or malevolent sorcerers, and the same may be said of the modern investigators of 'hypnotism, whose number is also limited; not more than twenty medical men can be cited who would be capable of calling forth hypnotism in necessary cases and applying it as a means of cure. Finally, as the ancient magic operations and their rare consequences have always been enveloped in a cloud of mystery, so are also those

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<sup>1</sup> Svietlov, *Strannik*, Dec. 1894, p. 641; *Questions of Philosophy and Psychology*, Book 8th, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> Hotynsky, *Witchcraft*, pp. 79-83; Svietlov, 'Mysticism,' *Strannik*, Nov. 1894, p. 442.

of hypnotism, and in particular the striking results of suggestion which remain to this day unexplained and enigmatical both with regard to their substance and actual causes.<sup>1</sup> Although it is undeniable that magic, in the form of theurgy and mantology, formed an essential part of heathen religions, and was considered both by the heathen and the fathers of the Church as the art of performing supernatural deeds through communication with gods and demons, this does not exclude the possibility that in the course of several millenniums of magic practice there may have been magi whose powerful will effected cures of illness no less wonderful than those which have taken place in the medical practice of Mesmer, Gassner, Greatrakes, Charcot, Riché, and other latest specialists of hypnotism.<sup>2</sup> Besides, whatever may be the views of scientific men as to the nature and effects of exorcisms and magic in general, still the importance of these mysterious manifestations of the human spirit in the history of ancient nations is proved by the circumstance that Holy Scriptures, the Word of Truth itself, contains indications both as to real facts of magic as well as to their possibility in general. Thus the sacred historian Moses mentions as an actual fact the transformation by the Egyptian sorcerers and magicians of the rods into serpents (Exod. vii. 11, 12), of water into blood (20-22), and the destruction of the frogs (Exod. viii. 6, 7).<sup>3</sup> In another passage, he admits, as a trial of love of the Lord God, the appearance of some prophet or dreamer of dreams, who by some magic

<sup>1</sup> Svetlov, 'Mysticism,' *Strannik*, Nov. 1894, pp. 441, 442.

<sup>2</sup> See Hotynsky, *Witchcraft*, pp. 71, 185, 351, 346; and Svetlov, 'Mysticism,' *Strannik*.

<sup>3</sup> Our celebrated national theologian, the metropolitan of Moscow, Philaret, certifies the literal signification of these testimonies in his work, *Outline of Biblical History*. Several foreign theologians are of the same opinion, such as Calmet, *Comment. litterale ad h. l.*, and Delitzsch, Fr., *System der Biblischen Psychologie*, p. 264, note 4. The absolute necessity of a literal understanding of Biblical testimony is also expounded in detail in the work of Savvaitzky, *The Departure of the Israelites from Egypt*, pp. 45, 55, 93, 94, 103, 104.

power will give a sign or a wonder, which will come to pass (Deut. xiii. 1-3). In a like manner, the Lord Himself, who by His coming has put the seal of ratification to the writings of the Law, of the Prophets, and the Psalms, and has revealed their true signification (Luke xxiv. 44, 45), announced that before the end of the world 'there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive' (enticement to incredulity) 'the very elect' (Matt. xxiv. 24).

All the matter set forth in this chapter can therefore be summed up in the following propositions:—

(a) Balak expected from Balaam the magic blessings (adjurations) and curses which were customary amongst the Syrians and Chaldeans.

(b) The relation between these blessings and curses and the real (prophetic) blessings and curses of the chosen people is the same as that between the object and its counterfeit.

(c) The authenticity of these magic blessings and curses has not been sufficiently confirmed by existing historical documents, nor have the causes or natural conditions of these ancient miraculous manifestations and prophecies been exactly determined from psychological and physiological points of view.

(d) Taking into consideration the various arguments which have been discussed, it must be admitted that no affirmative answer has been given to the question regarding the genuineness of supernatural magic operations in general.

(e) But in spite of this, Balak's appeal to the Mesopotamian Balaam, requesting him to curse the Israelites, so as to weaken their forces and deprive them of their conquests, becomes a clear and assured fact.

There remains yet the question, Whether Balaam really possessed any particular magic force of will, or did he only skilfully pass himself off as the possessor of such power? We leave the solution of this difficult question to the following chapter.

## CHAPTER III

### BALAAAM

*Numbers* xxii. 6; *Joshua* xiii. 22.

§ 1. IT has already been said (see chapter i.) that Balaam, son of Beor, lived in the town of Pethor, on the western bank of the Euphrates, to the north of the town of Circesium, and of the famous bridge over that river, within the boundaries of the settlements of the descendants of Aram; but our information as to his life and calling is very scanty. The Hebrew historians of a later period give us the following details about him:—‘At that time,’ says Philo, ‘there was a man universally known by his prophecies; he lived in Mesopotamia (אַרַם נְהָרַיִם), and was initiated in all the mysteries of the soothsayers’ art (mantology). In particular, he astonished many by his interpretation of the flight and cries of birds, by means of which he often attained great and incredible results. To some he would foretell an inundation during a hot summer, or drought and heat in the middle of winter; to others a bad harvest when the year was good, or, on the contrary, abundance during famine. He presaged the flooding and drying up of rivers, effected cures of contagious diseases, and rendered services in thousands of other cases, so that he acquired great renown by his prophecies, and general report spread his fame farther and farther.’<sup>1</sup> Some of the rabbis and

<sup>1</sup> Philonis opera, *de vita Moïsis*, lib. i. pp. 48, 168, 169. The personality of Balaam was, in general, interesting to the commentators of the Bible, and led to many legends and conjectures about his life and profession; the substance of these tales is, however, devoid of scientific importance. The

Arabian writers, on the contrary, throw ridicule upon him, and even give a dubious and foul colouring to his actions.<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt about Balaam's origin being Semitic. He probably belonged to the Syrian branch of that race, and therefore to the distant descendants of Shem's youngest son

Biblical scholar, Knobel, mentions them as follows: 'According to the narrative of Hedolius in the Catenae of Caballa (see *Codices Pseudepigraphi*), all the ancient Israelites maintain that Balaam was one of the counsellors of Pharaoh, like Zohar and Midrashim. Some of them have even invented a long tale, about Balaam's being sent to Ethiopia, where he was at the head of several cities during the absence of King Tsikam, and instigated them to rise against that king. The latter, wishing to recover his lost possessions, invited Moses to help him and to become his colleague on the throne. After the death of the king, Moses even took command of the army, marched against the kingdom, and drove away Balaam.' Knobel says: 'It is even possible to conjecture that Balaam is the same person as the Arabian sage Loqman, mentioned by Roediger in the *Hall. liter. Zeit.*, 1843, No. 95, p. 151, and by Derenbourg, *Fables de Loqman*, p. 5 et seq. The names Balaam and Loqman have the same signification = "swallower," devourer" (?). The father of Loqman was called Ba-ura, which resembles the name of Beor; and, in Hebrew, in the Book of Enoch, there is an indication that, in the Arabian language, Balaam is called לוֹקְנִין (Loqnin) instead of which, however, according to Roediger and Derenbourg, must be read לוֹקְמִין. This Loqman was celebrated for his knowledge and wisdom, and was considered by some Arabian authors as a descendant of Nahor, but the majority represent him as a slave from Abyssinia, who lived in the time of David. They consider him to have been a Hakim or sage, and not a Navi or prophet' (D'Herbelot, *Orient. Bibliothek*, iii. p. 193 et seq.). He is looked upon as the senior (Altheister) amongst the representatives of Arabian wisdom, the originator of Arabian morality, parables, allegories, and fables, the most ancient of Arabian authors. In the Koran, ii. 31, he is said to have received his wisdom from God, and the latest authors call him the first sage, the teacher of Empedocles (*Schazristani*, ii. p. 90; *Abulpharag.*, *Hist. dun.* p. 51). He was wise, but so voracious that his gluttony became proverbial (*Meidanii provv. arab.* ed. *Scehult*, pp. 12, 189). Arabian authors, such as Ibn-Coteiba (*Ibn-Coteiba*, p. 305) and Abulpheda (*Histor. Antislam*, p. 20), mention another and much more ancient Loqman, who belonged to the tribe of Aden, and lived in remote antiquity. He is supposed to have been one of the messengers sent by that tribe, during a great drought, to Mecca; and, after the destruction of the Adites, he remained in that sacred place and was blessed by God with very old age, living more than seven times eighty years. He is also mentioned by other Arab writers (*Meidanii provv. arab.* p. 157 et seq.; *Fabricii ad hamas*, p. 253). Knobel supposes, with much reason, that both Loqmans are one and the same person who, like Balaam among the Israelites, became the hero of a whole cycle of narratives (Knobel, *Kurzgef. Handbuch*, p. 126, 5th to chapter xxii. of the Book of Numbers).

<sup>1</sup> Hamburger, Joch., *Bileamus ejusque asina loquens*, quaest. ix. § 1.

Aram (Gen. x. 22; 1 Chron. i. 17). This is confirmed by the words of the fourth verse of chapter xxiii. of the Book of Deuteronomy: 'They hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia' (מִפְתּוֹר אֲרָם בְּהָרִים, or ἐκ τῆς Μεσοποταμίας in the Septuagint, from Mesopotamia), and by verse 7 of the 23rd chapter of Numbers: 'Balak... hath brought me [Balaam] from Aram' (מִן אֲרָם, or ἐκ Μεσοποταμίας in the Septuagint). Neither the Bible, nor the works of outside historians, give us any more positive information about the tribe and race from which Balaam sprang. The resemblance between the name of his father, Beor (בְּעוֹר), with the name of the father of the Edomite king Bela (Gen. xxxvi. 32), is a mere coincidence. We must also consider as very dubious the foundations upon which the ancient rabbis built their theory that Balaam belonged to the family of Nahor, identifying him, at the same time, with Eluah of the race of Buz<sup>1</sup> (Jeron. *Quaest. ad Gen.* xxii. 21). They also

<sup>1</sup> These different rabbinical opinions are cited in the previously mentioned pamphlet, Hamburger, Joch., *Bileamus ejusque asina loquens*, qu. ii. § 1; De Geer, *De Bileam*. p. 7; and Knobel, *Ex. Handb.* xiii. p. 125, 5. Nor can we permit the fact to pass unnoticed that some of the commentators of the Bible, in the literature of the Western world, such as Liran and Masius (see De Geer's *Dissertat. de Bil.* p. 10, and Hamburger, Joch., *Bileamus*, qu. ii. § 2), considered Balaam to have been a Midianite by the testimony of Num. xxxi. 8; Josh. xiii. 21, 22: 'Balaam also, the son of Beor, the soothsayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain by them.' But this only tells us that the death of Balaam took place amongst the Midianites. In describing the sad fate of the enemies of God's chosen people, the sacred historian observes, not without satisfaction, that the renowned Mesopotamian soothsayer, Balaam, had been justly punished for his misdeeds, as he had undertaken to curse Israel for an unrighteous reward, and had advised the Moabites to entice the Israelites to worship Baal-peor. This, however, does not give the clue to Balaam's origin. He may have taken up a temporary abode with the Midianites at the time of the revengeful attack of the Israelites without belonging to their race, but most probably as a help and counsellor in their hour of need. The conjecture that Balaam was an Ammonite is still less likely (see *Fabr. Cod. Pseudep.* vol. v. p. 808, and De Geer, *Bil.* p. 10), and may very probably have arisen from an incorrect interpretation of the Vulgate of Jerome, Num. xxii. 5: 'He sent messengers unto Balaam, son of Beor, the soothsayer, who lived on the river (Euphrates) in the land of the sons of

traced his origin back to Kemuel, mentioned in Genesis (xxii. 21), and finally they identified him with Laban, who, as is well known, lived five hundred years before Balaam's time. The sacred historian, for some unknown reason, deemed it unnecessary to enter into particulars about Balaam's calling, and simply calls him Balaam, or Balaam son of Beor, in the narrative of the events recorded in Num. xxii. 5-xxiv., and in other passages, such as Num. xxxi. 8-16; Deut. xxiii. 4, 5. One of the reasons for this silence may have been Balaam's fame, which made it unnecessary to mention his profession, and another may have been the ignorance of the Israelites concerning the art of magic, so that their vocabulary contained no name for his calling. Moses may also have simply considered it unnecessary to enter into details about Balaam's condition in life, a few of his deeds being sufficient for posterity to have a definite understanding of his personality and profession. However, several decades after the death both of Moses and Balaam, the latter is, in passing, called קוסם in Josh. xiii. 22. According to the interpretation of the Septuagint, קוסם means *μάντις* = 'soothsayer,' 'sorcerer'; and in the general opinion of the Greco-Roman world, the Greek word *μάντις* (from *μαίνομαι*) meant an enthusiastic man inspired from above, who foresees the future and possesses the gift of foretelling, i.e. a soothsayer. Such an interpretation of the word קוסם in this sense may have been adopted by the Septuagint in reference to Balaam for two reasons:—

Firstly, on the authority of certain passages of the Bible

Ammon' (אֲמֹנִי instead of אֲמֹנִי). This interpretation has been long since considered incorrect, as the land of Ammon never extended so far as the Euphrates. The Ammonites occupied the land to the east of the Jordan near the mountains of Gilead, between the rivers Jabbok and Arnon (Num. xxi. 24; Deut. ii. 36, 37, iii. 16; 2 Sam. xi. 1; Ezek. xxv. 5; Amos i. 13; Jer. xlix. 2, 3); and, even in its most flourishing political period, never extended beyond the southern limits of the Euphrates-Syria (see Herzog. *Real-Encyclop.*, under the word *Ammonite*). Balaam was undoubtedly a Syrian and an Aramite (cf. Num. xxiii. 7; Deut. xxiii. 4, 5).



(1 Sam. xxviii. 8, 9; Ezek. xxi. 21; Isa. iii. 2, xlv. 25) in which the word  $\text{קִסָּף}$ , with its derivatives, means, in a general sense, 'divination,' and, in a particular sense, 'divination through one's own spirit,' that is, 'prophecy by the voice of one's own heart,' by subjective imagination proceeding from an inborn capacity, without appealing to the true God (Ezek. xiii. 1-16, 23; Micah iii. 7, 11).<sup>1</sup> In the prophet Micah (iii. 6) the word  $\text{מִקְסָף}$ , derived from  $\text{קִסָּף}$ , stands parallel with the word *vision*  $\text{חִזֵּן}$  (hazon) and the word  $\text{קִסָּפִים}$  with foreseer.

Secondly, in the episode narrated in chapters xxii.-xxiv. of the Book of Numbers, Balaam manifested this side of his mind, that is to say, the gift of inspired foresight, of vision, of foretelling. The mental state of Balaam, in particular in the moment of inspired prediction, described in Num. xxiv.

<sup>1</sup>  $\text{קִסָּף}$  is generally considered as the participial form of the verb  $\text{קָסַף}$ , which, according to the interpretation of the Septuagint, of Jerome, and of the latest translators (see Fürst, *Hebr. Chl. Handw.*), means 'to cut,' 'to divide,' 'to determine the destiny,' 'to foretell.' The biblicist Stockius, gives a still more accurate translation of  $\text{קִסָּף}$  by the verb *divinare* = 'to have a presentiment of the future,' as if by divine inspiration, that is, 'to unveil what is concealed in the darkness of the future.' In the Septuagint the word  $\text{קִסָּף}$  is translated by the word *μαρτεύειν*, and by  $\text{קִסָּף}$  *μαρτεία* = presentiment and prediction of the future without external observation (cf. 1 Sam. xxviii. 8: 'Divine unto me by the familiar spirit'). The true (exact) signification of  $\text{קָסַף}$ ,  $\text{קִסָּף}$ , and  $\text{קִסָּפִים}$  is explained by comparison with the Arabic. Freytag supposes that the corresponding verb in the Arabic language signifies 'divided in parts,' 'settled a thing according to its measure, or as necessary, or in a certain manner,' 'weighed, disposed, settled something' —the similar words being 'division,' 'advice,' 'good sense,' 'conjecture,' 'infallible opinion.' All the significations of the root of the corresponding Arabic word indicate division. In the Aramaic language all the derivatives of this root have also the same signification, and mean division. In the Chaldean the word  $\text{קִסָּף}$  means a rod, a small piece of wood;  $\text{קִסָּף}$  a wooden ruler, rule, a long, straight piece of wood, a carpenter's measure, evidently from the word divide. The two words  $\text{קִסָּף}$  and  $\text{נִחֵשׁ}$  together mean divination, foretelling (cf. the relative difference of both in Nägelsbach's *Homer. Theol.* p. 194). In verse 23 of chapter xxiii.  $\text{נִחֵשׁ}$  and  $\text{קִסָּף}$  are mutually joined like two resources of which the heathen profited to investigate the future, as the result of the observation of signs and of seemingly inward divine communication (Hengsten. *Bil.* pp. 9, 10, note).

3, 4, 15, 16, is very similar to the violent excitement of the foretellers, which was known among the Greeks under the name of *μάντις*. But it is evident that the word *μάντις* (soothsayer) characterises only one side of Balaam's mind, and that not even the principal one. For the messengers were not sent by the Moabites to ask Balaam to predict the issue of their contest with the Israelites, but to call him 'to curse the people come from Egypt' (Num. xxii. 6, xxiii. 11, 13, 27, xxiv. 10), Balaam being known as a man whose curse had the power of calling forth real misfortunes (Num. xxii. 6; Deut. xxiii. 4, 5; Josh. xxiv. 9, 10). It is therefore probable that the translation of the word קסם in the Septuagint is not strictly correct, and that, applied to the person of Balaam, it strictly means a clear-sighted exorcist or sorcerer. This interpretation has reasonable grounds. The blessed Theodoritus considered Balaam as a magician *μάντις* (see Explanation of the Book of Numbers, quest. 39, 42, 44). The proper sense of the root קסם is 'to split,' 'to divide,' also 'to decide,' 'to pronounce a sentence or an infallible decision.' In Prov. xvi. 10, the word קסם means an immutable sentence of the king, which has to be fulfilled absolutely, and this idea is nearer to that of a curse than to that of a prophecy. The learned interpreter Delitzsch states that the radical signification of קסם is 'to fasten,' 'to curse,' similar to the analogous Arabic word '*aksama*,'<sup>1</sup> and therefore corresponds to the words אָרַר and נָקַם. This interpretation is supported by the following considerations:—It has long ago been generally acknowledged that words are the signs which express ideas by which objects and actions are reflected in the human mind. If a certain object or fact does not exist in reality, the idea of it and a word to express that idea will be wanting. This rule is illustrated by the fact that, owing to the absence of corresponding objects and actions, some nations have neither

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<sup>1</sup> Scholz, *Goetzendienst*, p. 74, note 1.

the ideas nor words which other races possess from their knowledge of such objects and actions. When, in consequence of some historical event, one nation comes in contact with another nation, and becomes acquainted with objects and actions which till then had been unknown to them, those new objects and conceptions are invested with a foreign name. Examples of this exist in thousands, as all European literature abounds with terms taken from the Greeks and Romans; our own Russian literature, indeed, is full of them. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that the word קִיָּם and its root קִיָּ could not have originated from the descendants of Abraham, because to admit this would be to affirm that there were soothsayers, wizards, and enchanters amongst the direct descendants of Abraham, which is absolutely against the testimony of Deut. xviii. 9-14.

On the contrary, it is more reasonable to admit, in accordance with that passage, that the words קִיָּם and קִיָּ refer to the actions of the heathen nations, and are the offspring of their spirit, which had already penetrated to the Israelites during their residence in Egypt from the side to which they themselves had the greatest inclination, that is, from the east through the medium of the Canaanite inhabitants of the kindred land of Mesopotamia. It has been already mentioned that magic and mantology were particularly cultivated in Chaldea, and most of all by its ancient inhabitants the Akkadians. From the cuneiform inscriptions which give a translation of the works upon magic from the Akkadian into the Assyrian language, it is known that a sorcerer was called in Akkadian *ka-ka-ma*, literally 'vehement outcrier,' and in Assyrian *asipu*.<sup>1</sup> These details are very important for the right definition of the sense of the word קִיָּם; since the literal signification of *ka-ka-ma*, 'vehement outcrier,' or 'vehement foreteller' (messenger), shows the remarkable similarity between the

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<sup>1</sup> Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften*, p. 430.

exorcist and the soothsayer in reference to the extreme, almost frantic, state of excitement which they both displayed during their exorcisms, or predictions. Further, in the same manner as the word *asipu* passed into the Hebrew language and became modified into אִשְׁפָּא in the Book of Daniel (Dan. i. 20, ii. 2, 27, iv. 7, v. 7, 11), so may the ancient Akkadian word *ka-ka-ma* have been modified even then in Abraham's family, and have been transformed, according to the genius of the Hebrew language, into כּוֹסֵם = *kosem*. We may, therefore, now admit that כּוֹסֵם, the modified *ka-ka-ma*, is identical with *asipu*, the modified Hebrew אִשְׁפָּא. The word אִשְׁפָּא, in the plural אִשְׁפָּאִים, is translated in the Septuagint as μάγοι = magician (Dan. i. 20, ii. 2, 27, iv. 7, v. 7, 11). All these different combinations therefore show us the magician Balaam not only in the light of a foreteller, but also in that of a conjurer or predictive conjurer. He thus represented in his own person the uncommon union of magical capacities in their fullest and most perfect aspect: that is to say, he could foresee as well as conjure, and possessed the magic power of the sorcerer, combined with the delicate receptivity of the seer.

§ 2. This wonderful property of Balaam's nature may be traced in his name or surname. It is well known that, in ancient times in the East, a name designated not only the conditional sign of an object, but its very substance, the characteristic good or bad qualities of his nature; thus the Israelites used the name instead of the person named, and instead of saying the 'Lord,' it was usual to say 'the name of the Lord' (Deut. xxviii. 58; Ps. xx. 1, lxxii. 19; Isa. xxx. 27; Ps. cxvi. 4). It follows, as a matter of course, that the word אִשְׁפָּא, in the translation of the Septuagint Βαλαάμ, in Josephus Βάλαμος, must be regarded as an Aramaic-Chaldean name, which has been slightly modified in the foreign Hebrew dialect. In reality, if we were to admit that אִשְׁפָּא is a Hebrew word given as a surname to the Mesopotamian soothsayer by Moses, or any other person, the attempt to determine both the radical origin

of the word, and the signification itself of the name or surname would have to be given up. Some interpreters, such as Simonis, Hengstenberg, Reinke, De Geer, Sherey, Montane, Grellius, and Fesselius, derive this name from the Hebrew בָּלַע (devouring) and עַם (people), and suppose that Balaam means 'devourer of people,' 'terrible conjurer and magician'; whilst others, no less learned and authoritative, such as Gesenius, derive the name from בָּל (no people, that is, foreigner); a third (Vitranga) derives the name from בָּלַעַם (master of the people); and yet a fourth traces the derivation from בָּלַע joined to the formative syllable דָּ, which means 'their destroyer,' 'their devourer.'<sup>1</sup> In the meantime, every surname must have one definite signification; and the above-named explanations cannot be considered correct, having regard to all the well-known facts of Balaam's connection with the Israelites, for although Balaam caused some harm to the Israelites (Num. xxxi. 16, xxv.), still they did not thereby lose the capacity and power of conquering their enemies the Canaanites. On the contrary, if we take into consideration that the celebrated Mesopotamian soothsayer was famous long before his meeting with the Israelites, and was known afar under the name of Balaam, son of Beor (Num. xxii. 5), which he had received on account of his wonderful magic gift either at his birth, or later, the signification of the name of 'Balaam' becomes quite intelligible, and in accordance with the conjectural definition of the profession which had gained him such renown amongst his contemporaries. The name of Balaam reminds us indeed of many similar names, *e.g.* Balthasar, בִּלְסַשְׁצָר, Bil-sar-usur, Belbalat, Bîl-ba-lat, Bil-ma-lik,<sup>2</sup> Baladan בִּלְאָדָן from בִּלְאָד, worshipper of Bela (2 Kings xx. 12).<sup>3</sup> All these names have for their first syllable the word Bel (the

<sup>1</sup> Hamburger, *Bileam. qu.* 1, § 2; De Geer, *Bil.* p. 6; Hengstenberg, *Bil.* pp. 20, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften*, pp. 480-484.

<sup>3</sup> Gesenius, *Lexicon Manuale Hebr. et Chaldaicum*.

Babylonian deity Bi-lu), 'master,' stat. constr. Bil.<sup>1</sup> Bil, or Bi-lu, being a foreign word, is rendered differently by the Massoreths, and depends on their knowing, or not knowing, the Mesopotamian origin of the bearer of the name. Thus they read the names of the well-known Babylonian kings Baladan and Balthasar as בִּלְאָדָן and בִּלְתַּשְׁצַּר, and kept the transcription of the name בִּל as master, but they read בִּלְיָ (Job ii. 11, viii. 1, xviii. 1, xxv. 1) and בִּלְעָם with slight modifications, as having an unknown signification. Josephus states that the word בִּלְעָם may be read as בִּלְעָם = Βάλαμος. This is confirmed by the fact that the Septuagint read בִּלְעָם as בִּלְעָם, and the word analogous by its first integral part with בִּלְעָם, namely, בִּלְיָ, was read as בִּלְיָ, Βαλδαδ. It is therefore evident that the first integral part of Balaam's name is the slightly modified name of the Mesopotamian god Bilu, in Hebrew בִּלְעָם = master. We find an indirect confirmation of this interpretation in the following data:—Bel was considered the protector of astrology and necromancy (mantology); and this is the reason why Ea, 𒂗, god of wisdom, was sometimes identified with Bel. Bel is called 𐎶𐎵, prophet, and one of the newly discovered works on the art of soothsaying bears the name of Namar-Bel, 'Enlightenment of Bel.'<sup>2</sup> Balaam was at the same time a soothsayer, and, as such, was of course supposed to be under the protection of Bel, and may very well have appropriated his name as a sign of that protection, which was done by some of the renowned Babylonian and Assyrian kings. The second integral part of the word עַם signifies 'people,' according to the general opinion of Hebrew scholars; therefore, literally, the name of Balaam signifies 'master of the people.' This interpretation is not a new discovery; it is mentioned by Vittinga (in *Observ. Sacr.* iv. C. 9, g. 2, p. 1002).<sup>3</sup> Having, however, once admitted that the name

<sup>1</sup> Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften*, p. 539.

<sup>2</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, p. 446.

<sup>3</sup> Hengstenberg, *Bil.* p. 23.

'Balaam' is Mesopotamian, we must search for a corresponding explanation of the second part of the word in the cuneiform inscriptions. First of all, it is well known that the word 'people' in the Assyrian language is **אָמָּם**, amamu,<sup>1</sup> um-ma-nu, therefore Balaam in Assyrian can be Bîl-um-ma-nu. By comparing Bîl-um-ma-nu with Bîl-am and **Βαλαάμ**, it follows that the word loses almost two syllables (ma-nu) by transfer into the Hebrew language. Such an abbreviation, however, is too considerable, and the derivation of Bîl-am, or **Βαλαάμ**, from Bîl-am-ma-nu, becomes doubtful; it appears more reasonable to interpret the second integral part of the word Balaam not by the word **עַם**, people, but by a mutilated form of the Assyrian word a-mā-tu, stat. constr. a-mâ-t (a-mat), 'word,' 'history,' 'thing,'<sup>2</sup> so that in Assyrian it follows that we should read Bîl-amat, which signifies 'master of the word' (and action). There is nothing improbable in the supposition that, in passing from the Assyrian to the Hebrew language, Bîl-amat was transformed into Bîlam, or **Βαλαάμ**, as it is known that the same transformation exists in other similar names; e.g. Bil-sar-usur,<sup>3</sup> 'Bel, defence of the King,' is read in Hebrew 'Belshazzar,' **בֶּלְשַׁצְצָר**; or, according to the Septuagint, **Βαλτάσαρ**=Balthasar; Balâtsu-usur,<sup>4</sup> Balâtasu-usur, 'guard his life,' is rendered in Hebrew by **בֶּלְטַסְצָר** Beltsazar, or, exactly according to the Septuagint **Βαλτάσαρ**=Balthasar; the Assyrian a-si-pu, soothsayer, becomes in Hebrew **אֲשַׁף**, **עַבְד־נְבֻךְ**, or Ab-du-na-bu, 'servant of Nebo,' and is read in Hebrew as **עַבְד־נֶגֶז**, Abdenego, or, according to the Septuagint, **Αβδεναγώ**=Abdenago.<sup>5</sup> The derivation of the name of Balaam from the Assyrian Bîl-amatu, which means, properly speaking, 'master of the word (and action),' that is to say, one who by his word (exorcism) has the power of command over

<sup>1</sup> Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften*, p. 496.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 445.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 433.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 429.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 429; Lenormant, *Magie*, p. 532.

the will of those under its influence, may therefore be accepted as by no means far fetched.<sup>1</sup>

What position, then, did Balaam occupy as a man endowed with such remarkable gifts, and how can the question be represented? He is represented as a Chaldean soothsayer, gifted with powers of exorcism and cursing, and therefore capable of bestowing happiness, or sending disasters. Therefore it may be supposed that, like other Chaldean sorcerers, he made use of his wonderful vigorous power of will in the form of curses pronounced with the object of counteracting, whether apparently or actually, the destructive influence of evil spirits and sorcerers, and of averting other misfortunes to which mankind is exposed. Balaam employed his magic force of will in the form of exorcisms or appealed to divine protection in order to guard mankind from every evil, misfortune, and sickness, by calling down on those who appeal to him a divine power which would guard them from harm and contribute to their welfare; and as, besides this gift, he possessed also, by inspiration, the gift of infallibly foretelling the consequences of different worldly events, it may be supposed that he employed divination (or foretelling) in trances similar to hypnotical sleep, or in a state of ecstasy during which were revealed to him the intentions of individuals, and, indeed, of whole nations. Thanks to this gift of divination, he was enabled to give more or less useful advice as to the best means of getting out of difficulties. Besides the power of divination during magic trances, or transports of ecstasy, Balaam, like other Chaldean astrologers, was able to divine the future by means of observing different natural phenomena, which were at that time considered significant, such as the prophetic appearances of birds, the direction of their flight (see Num.

<sup>1</sup> Another explanation may also be given, namely, that בַּלְעָם is the modified Assyrian or Mesopotamian word בַּלְעָמַנִּי, which means, properly speaking, 'conjurer of Bel' (cf. signification of *Amanu* in Lenormant, *Magie*, p. 16, and of *ka-ka-ma* in Schrader's *Keilinschriften*, p. 430).



xxiv. 1, οἰωνοί, Hebrew נִחְשִׁים), flashes of lightning, the movements of serpents, dogs, asses, or other animals, the rustling of trees, peculiarities in the colour and appearance of the viscera of sacrificial animals (oxen, mules, bulls, sheep, dogs, lions, etc.).<sup>1</sup> It is therefore probable that Balaam was at the same time a foreteller and a conjurer. Such a union of both gifts was not uncommon in those remote times. Firstly, according to certain indications in the Pentateuch, it appears that the Hebrew word אָרַר, 'to curse,' is employed in cases in which the curse is akin to a prophecy (cf. Gen. iii. 14, ix. 25; Deut. xxvii. 15-26); secondly, as has been previously mentioned, mantology (divination) proceeded from magic, so that in reality the magi were also soothsayers.<sup>2</sup> This might arise from many causes. The ancients considered both functions necessary to avert evil and ward off calamities, such as illnesses and assaults of enemies; while the people of anterior Asia were of the opinion that magic could only avert or paralyse actual evil, to unveil the future or give good advice in the hour of need did not enter within its sphere. Mantology, on the contrary, was the gift of foreseeing the future, and of giving counsel, without possessing power to avert an impending misfortune or to bestow desired happiness. Therefore mantology required magic as an auxiliary. Besides, the contemporaries of Balaam, and the ancients in general, were convinced that no curse or blessing was fulfilled at the moment of its being pronounced, but in the more or less distant future. Such a notion concerning the term of the fulfilment of the magic sentences was indispensable by the essence of the matter and for retaining the confidence of the people. For this reason every magic exorcism or adjuration which was only to be accomplished in the future, required a certain prophetic insight as to the possibility of its fulfilment.

<sup>1</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, pp. 440-479.

<sup>2</sup> Maury, *Magie*, p. 13; Lenormant, *Magie*, p. 207; Duncker, *Geschichte des Alterthums*, Bd. ii. p. 376.

§ 3. After this another question suggests itself—Was Balaam really endowed with the faculties of conjuration and foresight? Judging from the above-mentioned arguments as to the genuineness of certain magic operations (similar in nature to the phenomena of hypnotism), it may be admitted that Balaam was one of those exceptional individuals who are endowed with magic power of mental action and foresight, developed in full perfection in consequence of the peculiarity of their physical and moral nature, and to conditions favourable to their spiritual development. This opinion cannot, however, be accepted without reserve, for the views of many learned Bible scholars are very much at variance upon the subject; those scientific men who, either from unbelief in the supernatural, or out of misapprehension, reject the genuineness of magic and mantology naturally deny the reality of Balaam's magic gifts.<sup>1</sup> Others, regarding magic in general as one of the most evident proofs of Satan's destructive and alluring influence, were inclined to recognise the manifestation of some miraculous force in Balaam's past actions.<sup>2</sup> This is partly justified by the following considerations founded in facts. If there is really any truth in the foundation of magic (witchcraft) and mantology (divination), there must be, objectively speaking, a real force in the magic blessing and curse of Balaam. Soothsayers (magians) existed amongst all the nations of the ancient world, and particularly amongst the nearest neighbours of the Moabites, the Egyptians, the Philistines (1 Sam. vi. 2), and other Syrian nations. However, it is not to them that the Moabites send messengers, but to the distant land of Mesopotamia. Is not this a proof of the fame Balaam had gained as a magician, and could such renown have been gained otherwise than by the efficacy of

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<sup>1</sup> This was the opinion of Hengstenberg (*Bil.* pp. 37, 38) as well as that of the rationalists.

<sup>2</sup> Keil und Delitzsch. *Com. üb. Büch. Mos.*, ii. p. 317; Delitzsch, *Psycholog.* p. 264, note 4.

his magic? The Holy Scriptures generally indicate the true meaning attached to the actions of the heathen gods and their worshippers. The sacred historian Moses recognises as an undoubted fact the miracles of the Egyptian sorcerers, *e.g.* the turning of the rods into serpents, of water into blood, the destruction of the frogs; but he also says that the magicians could not bring forth lice by means of their enchantments (Exod. viii. 18), and he thus negatively affirms the reality of the preceding miracles. From this it may be concluded that the story of Balak's message, and the whole episode contained in the twenty-second to the twenty-fourth chapters of the Book of Numbers, narrated without reserve, may be taken as a guarantee of the authenticity of Balaam's past exorcisms and prophecies. This conclusion is made still more probable by the fact that the holy writers of the Bible consider the deliverance of the Israelites from Balaam's curse and its conversion into a blessing as one of the great mercies and manifestations of love vouchsafed by the Lord to His chosen people (cf. Deut. xxiii. 5; Josh. xxiv. 10; Micah vi. 5; Nehem. xiii. 2). In the first of these passages we read: *'Nevertheless the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee;'* and in the second, *'But I [the Lord] would not hearken unto Balaam; therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand.'* It is true that some commentators, anxious to maintain their dogmatical prejudices, interpret these plain testimonies of the holy writers of the Bible in the sense 'that even the aversion of an inefficacious curse remains a benefit, particularly as, the Israelites being not less superstitious than their heathen neighbours, the rumour of this curse, which might have had an invigorating effect on their enemies, was quite capable of striking them with terror, and the impending curse was very likely such as to cast them into the depths of

despair.’<sup>1</sup> But this explanation of the invigorating effect of Balaam’s empty exorcisms can only refer to the enemies of the Israelites. Such means could not have produced any overwhelming effect on the latter. For how could the Israelites have heard of these exorcisms if they had really taken place, and of the soothsayer who had been hired by the Moabites, when, owing to the suspected enmity of the Moabites and other circumstances, there was not and could not be any communication between the two people? Besides this, at that time the Israelites were in a state of extraordinary religious exaltation of spirit; they felt themselves in the evident presence of the all-conquering Jehovah after the wonderful proofs He had given them of His power over all the forces of nature and of the gods, and had worked so many signs and miracles in their favour, so that less than ever could they have given way to any superstitious feelings, and have recognised power where none existed, or experienced any other fear than that of the righteously chastising hand of the Lord of Lords, Jehovah. And in view of these explanations, what harm could the Moabites have done to the Israelites, whose position was so secure? Would they not have finally shared the fate of the Amorite kings who perished in consequence of having attacked the Israelites? And is it possible that the great prophet Moses could have seen and represented to his beloved fellow-tribesmen dangers which did not exist, and which could not have existed, at least, during his lifetime? Therefore, if Moses speaks of the deliverance of the Israelites from Balaam’s curse as a mercy, it shows that he recognised a certain power in Balaam’s magic arts, and believed in his ability to injure them. It is solely from this point of view of Balaam’s magic gifts that the full and true signification of Moses’ assertion appears when he says that the

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<sup>1</sup> Hengstenberg, *Bil.* pp. 37, 38. This hazardous assertion as to the efficacy of magic and mantology in general, and of Balaam’s curses in particular, has been circumstantially refuted by Kurtz in his *Geschichte des alt. Test.* ii. pp. 472, 5.

Lord would not listen to Balaam, and turned his curse to a blessing; that He forbade him to curse the Israelites (Num. xxii. 12); and, when Balaam, carried away by his cupidity, ardently desired to do so, sent an angel to stand in his way to the land of Moab with a terrible warning not to curse the chosen people (Num. xxii. 22-25).

The above-mentioned facts do not only establish Balaam's undoubted capacity to exorcise and cause injury to a whole nation by means of spells producing despondency, fear, or sickness, or by calling forth destructive phenomena, such as hailstorms (Exod. ix. 18-25), the transformation of water into blood (Exod. vii. 20), plague (Exod. xii. 29, 30), or an invasion of frogs (Exod. viii. 3), but also indicate the real source and condition of this wonderful capacity. In fact, the testimony of the holy writers of the Bible, that the Lord forbade Balaam to curse the Israelites, warned him by the terrible apparition of an angel, refused to hear his supplication for a curse, and turned his curse into a blessing (Num. xxii. 12, 22-25; Deut. xxiii. 5; Josh. xxiv. 10), are proofs that Balaam cursed or exorcised, that is, called forth or removed misfortunes, with God's permission, by means of some supernatural innate force of will, on the same principle that it is by the will of God that some perish by sword and bullet, and that others are cured from diseases by healing remedies.

Another interesting question arises, How Balaam discovered this faculty in himself, and what natural qualities of organisation are required to call forth such an uncommon spiritual force? How did he attain to a true perception of God and recognise the benefit of appealing to Him for direction in necessary cases?

§ 4. As has been already said, Balaam came from Mesopotamia, more precisely from Aram, which lay close to Assyria and Chaldea, and was under the religious influence of those countries; therefore, if magic and mantology were particularly developed and practised amongst the Chaldeo-Assyrians and

the Syrian nations, these mysterious sciences must have been well known in Aram. In the meantime, it is known from the Chaldean works on magic that there existed in Mesopotamia a particular class of diviners, called 'sabru,'<sup>1</sup> to whom the gods specially communicated prophetic dreams. Besides, the numerous exorcisms which have been preserved certify to the existence of exorcists from the earliest antiquity amongst the Mesopotamian nations—the Babylonians and Assyrians.<sup>2</sup>

We can form no idea of the social position and importance of these conjurers and diviners, except by comparison with the social position and profession of their later descendants, who were known under the name of Chaldeans, כַּלְדָּיִם (Dan. ii. 2, iv. 7). These were priests (Diod. Sic. i. 24-28; Nicol. Damasc. bei Müller fr. h. Gr. iii. 358)—principally of Bel (Herod. i. 181)—and at the same time native philosophers (ἐπιχώριοι φιλόσοφοι, Strabo 16, 1; Clem. Alex. Strom. 1, 15; Amm. Marc. 22, 6), who dwelt principally in Babylon. They also lived in the towns of Orcha and Borsippa, and occupied separate dwellings (κατοικία), that is to say, special houses (cf. Dan. ii. 5) near to the temple of Bel. They studied astronomy and the drawing up of horoscopes (Strabo, 16, 1). This caste of priests is very accurately described by Diodorus of Sicily (2, 29-31; with whom may be compared Sextus Empir. c. mathem. 1. 5) 'They were occupied during their lifetime with philosophy, and were particularly renowned as readers of the stars and as soothsayers. They averted evil and occasioned good by various means—by purifications, sacrifices, and

<sup>1</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, p. 494, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Magians have existed in all the countries where fetichism takes the place of religion; such priests are at the same time soothsayers, prophets (pretended), exorcists, workers of miracles (pretended), doctors, manufacturers of holy images and amulets. They preach neither morality nor good deeds; they acknowledge no regular worship, and keep to no forms or ceremonies in their temples or at their altars; they are called in only in cases of need. Nevertheless, they exercise a great influence over the mass of the people and occupy the place of ordained ministers of God (Maury, *Magie*, p. 7 *et seq.*; Lenormant, *Magie*, pp. 81-84).

exorcising melodies; they were also experienced in explaining the flight of birds, interpreting dreams, or any other significant phenomena; they were also considered skilful in observing the sacrificial victims and exactly discovering the truth. Their science was confined to their own caste, and was transmitted from father to son, their studies beginning in early childhood.<sup>1</sup> According to the information given by Lucian, the Chaldeans foretold the future (*Hermotim.* 6), were men possessing mysterious and supernatural knowledge (*Menippus*, 6), cured diseases by sentences and strange means (*Philopseud*, 11, 12), drove away destructive worms by marching round the fields with torches and sulphurous vapours (*ibid.* 13), knew, by the help of certain exorcising formulas and mysterious ceremonies, how to apparently open the gates of the kingdom of death and to call forth and send back the shades of the dead.<sup>2</sup>

The Chaldeans led a very simple life, eating only barley bread; and this is the reason, or is supposed to be, why their eyesight became very piercing and their senses keener than

<sup>1</sup> Scholz, *Goetzendienst*, p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Experimental knowledge is meant here under the name of mysterious sciences. Experimental knowledge is acquired by transmission from the one to the other in consequence of experimental imitation in the same way as every animal teaches its young by means of simple experience the movements necessary for the support of life. As all the instinctive movements, even of men, appeared till quite recently, that is, until the development of natural sciences, mysterious and incomprehensible, from the point of view of the laws of physics, chemistry, physiology, and psychology, much more must the phenomena of magic (hypnotism) and of mantology (somnambulism) have appeared mysterious and wonderful. The only side of the question, which appeared more or less comprehensible, was the moral state of mind which accompanied and preceded these phenomena; but, being a fact of inward experiment, it could only be transmitted by verbal description, and understood only by those who were in the same frame of mind. People of a different disposition who wished to become magi did not rightly understand this knowledge, and when they put their science into action proved to be false jugglers. As to the opening of the doors of the kingdom of death and calling forth the dead, these facts are no other than spiritualistic manifestations dependent on a peculiar quality of the will which exists nowadays in the subjects called 'powerful mediums.' The shade of Samuel called forth by the enchantress of En-dor belongs undoubtedly to this class of manifestations (1 Sam. xxviii. 6-15).

those of other people.<sup>1</sup> Except the Akkadian language, which was considered sacred, the language generally spoken by the ancient Chaldeans was the Aramaic<sup>2</sup> (Dan. ii. 4); it was used in the whole territory between the Tigris and the Mediterranean, and served in the relations of the Semitic tribes with other nations, such as the Assyrians with the literate Hebrews (2 Kings xviii. 26; Isa. xxxvi. 11).<sup>3</sup>

Balaam was therefore surrounded by sufficiently favourable circumstances for the development of the wonderful gifts of soothsaying and divination. On one side the opportunity was given to him of studying from his earliest youth the wonders of magic and mantology; on the other, he may, under circumstances unknown to us, have stood in close connection with the magi, or have even sprung from that learned and deeply religious caste,<sup>4</sup> to which magic and mantology formed the principal profession in life. In either case he had abundant opportunities for trying his powers and becoming acquainted with the forms and ceremonies which were then in use as accessories to exorcisms and divination.

The result was that he discovered in himself *peculiar forces* which inspired him with all needful assurance in his own power, and caused him to become famous amongst the ordinary magi, who practised their art only by virtue of ancient sacred custom and thanks to the blind faith of the pious but ignorant populace.

But in what did these peculiar forces consist, and on what particular qualities of the soul were they founded? A double answer may be given to this question, according to the light in which Balaam is regarded. Are we to consider him as a soothsayer in the strict sense of a conjuring sorcerer, or under the word soothsayer (magian) are we likewise to see in him a clear-

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<sup>1</sup> Scholz, *Goetzendienst*, p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> *Translator's note* :—In the English version of the Bible 'Syrian.'

<sup>3</sup> Scholz, *Goetzendienst*, p. 81.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 85; Lenormant, *Magie*, p. 324.



sighted wise man ? If we admit that Balaam was a soothsayer in the sense of a sorcerer, and also a soothsayer in the sense of a magian, who was renowned over the whole of anterior Asia, we cannot explain his fame otherwise than by conjecturing that he was in touch with the spiritual world, and endowed with particular qualities of will similar to those which appear in hypnotism and somnambulism. The general opinion is that hypnotisers like the celebrated Dr. Mesmer, the healer Greatrakes, and others were endowed with a peculiar healing (and harmful) persistent and powerfully self-confident will. Therefore the sorcerer also, in order to produce magic influences or effects similar to the manifestations of hypnotism, must absolutely be endowed with a peculiar power of will and an energetic and passionate wish to inspire the object of his action with the desired disposition and thoughts in the given case. It is evident that Balaam possessed these mysterious and uncommon forces of will, by means of which under certain conditions different alterations may be produced in some determinate position of the natural world, or in the moral state of animated beings, without having recourse to mechanical agents. In everyday life these forces are apt, as has already been said in the preceding chapter, to slumber in the depths of the human soul, even of those who are endowed with these gifts ; they are entangled and bound by the fetters and impediments of the outward material life and the pleasures of the moment ; but they are called forth in time of need by some strong emotion either of pity or anger, the obstacles give way, the latent magic force awakens and moves freely through every material impediment, and acts upon the chosen object. The magic force of will, like every other force and capacity, is an instrument, or a condition apt to call forth both beneficial and injurious results ; but what is required above all to insure the success of these operations is that the operator should possess endurance and fearlessness, as well as confidence in his own uncommon gifts and general superiority over

ordinary beings. If, however, we admit that Balaam, besides this, was also a clear-sighted, wise man, we must necessarily suppose the addition of an extraordinarily lively imagination and most impressionable nature to the unusual force of will just described. These traits of character, joined to those above mentioned, are usually inherent in people of a nervous or choleric temperament. Such people are generally very lively and demonstrative in the expression of their thoughts and feelings; and their mobility of ideas and impressions enables them to recognise the difference between two successive psychical conditions even in cases where that difference is imperceptible to others. Besides this, the diviner requires a strongly developed memory. Thus a rapid accumulation of impressions is rendered possible, and the natural phenomena and human conditions liable to prediction and divination can be observed and studied with success. A diviner must also be able to detect analogies where they are not noticeable to others, and must join to that the capacity of original and typical metaphors, similes, comparisons, allegories, explanations, and the composition of melodious and expressive verses, symbolical signs, and formulas. He must have an eye for symmetry and an ear for harmony, and must know how to discover general qualities in concrete facts. Such being the traits of character necessary for the position of priest or sage, it would be natural to suppose that his life would be devoted to study and to meditation concerning the objects under his observation. Such faculties and occupations are generally connected with a calm and serene frame of mind, inaccessible to unnecessary and involuntary psychical commotions, yet capable of conscious outbursts of emotion or ecstasy.<sup>1</sup>

§ 5. Such are the characteristic features of the spiritual organism with which Balaam must have been endowed in view of his far-spread fame and the wonderful gift which

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<sup>1</sup> Bain, *On the Study of Character*, pp. 292-392.

he possessed of causing calamities and happiness, and of foreseeing the future by the powerful action of his will. These peculiar moral qualities in the case of Balaam denote a great wealth of spiritual material. How are we then to describe this uncommon character? In what forms was it manifested, and what spheres did it embrace? The only answer we can give is to draw a spiritual parallel between Balaam and similar individuals who also lived in the same part of ancient Asia, such as Solomon, Ahithophel (2 Sam. xvi. 23), Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Chalcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol (1 Kings iv. 31), or the four wise men who came out of friendship to comfort the long-suffering Job in his misfortunes (Job ii.-v., viii., xi., xviii., xx., xxii., xxv., xxxii.-xxxvii.). All these were considered the wisest men of their time, and their wisdom mainly consisted in a clearer comprehension of temporary events than that possessed by ordinary people, and in the capacity of giving counsels most suitable to the requirements of the circumstances. But that was only one side of their character. The other relates to their vast knowledge of the surrounding world, to the explanation of difficult questions and problems. As to the sphere of Solomon's wisdom, it comprehended the observation of nature, the study of the forms of vegetable and animal life, 'and he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes' (1 Kings iv. 33). . . . 'Over and above this, Solomon's wisdom showed itself particularly in parables, למשל, in questions concerning the end of life, and in inquiries and answers relating to difficult questions resulting from human experience. These he expressed under the form of analogies or short formulæ—the prevailing form in which the intellectual activity of the Arabian tribes expressed itself.'<sup>1</sup> It is reasonable to

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<sup>1</sup> See A. P. Lapoukhine, *Biblical History*, vol. ii. p. 369.

suppose that Balaam was acquainted with science to the same extent, for the Chaldean magi were also called *wise men* (Dan. ii. 12, 13, 18, 24, 48, iv. 18). Balaam, as a conjurer and foreteller, must have also been a wise man, and had the same knowledge of life as the wise men of Israel. Dwelling in close vicinity to Chaldea, he must have grown familiar with the famous Chaldean learning and wisdom (cf. Dan. i. 14-17), in which were comprised sacred hymns, prayers to the gods, exorcising and adjuring songs (speeches), and prophetic tokens.<sup>1</sup> But these gifts and this science would scarcely have been of sufficient importance to raise Balaam above his numerous colleagues and render him celebrated throughout anterior Asia. We must therefore conclude that Balaam, as a Semite, joined to his knowledge and talents an acute innate capacity of presentiment and an inclination to fall into a condition of clairvoyant enthusiasm, like that of the Grecian augurs Calchas, Theoclymenus, and the Sibyls. As a condition of clairvoyant enthusiasm is essentially a condition of inward feeling, and Balaam bore the name of 'Kosem,' which means one who seeks for revelation in the depths of his spirit and exercises influence over others, it is easy to admit that through a long period of meditation and self-concentration he attained to such a degree of lucidity and sensibility of consciousness as that which, according to the testimony of ancient and modern historians, belonged to the Greek sage Socrates, and bore the name of 'demonion' (divine inspiration). There remains yet one last question to solve, viz.: By what means did the soothsayer Balaam come to confess Jehovah as his God, and how did he dare to appeal to the Lord and ask His advice about the messages sent to him as a soothsayer (see Deut. xxiii. 5; Josh. xxiv. 10)?

§ 6. The answer to this question requires first of all a

<sup>1</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, pp. 111-151. See a short summary of the sciences included in Chaldean wisdom (Astafiev, N., *Babylonian and Assyrian Antiquities according to the Latest Discoveries*, pp. 36-42).

correct definition of the difference between true religion and paganism and the cause of its origin. True religion, as the life in God, is the worship of God in spirit and truth (John iv. 23, 24). The worship in spirit indicates the subjective relations of man, namely, the feelings and voluntary acts out of which, and under the form of which, he must worship the Divinity; these are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Gal. v. 22, 23). By truth is meant the Divine Law, which is the reunion of all the commandments, and we see its personified expression in the life and work of God the Son, Who has deigned to call Himself the Truth (John xiv. 6). Therefore paganism is an estrangement from God, and is in opposition to Him; it is the false and carnal worship of the Divinity; it takes the form of sensual (or bloody) ceremonies and sacrifices for the satisfaction of self-imagined relations to the Divinity, for the fulfilment of a self-invented righteousness instead of the divine righteousness. For those who have become heathens became so *'because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator'* (Rom. i. 21-23, 25).

If such is the substance and origin of paganism, every return of the heathen to truth is in reality the cessation of his worship of God in falsehood and in the flesh, and the beginning of worship in spirit and truth. Such a return without outward revelation, or divinely enlightened guidance, is only possible through very sincere recourse to the voice of conscience, or to the commands of the natural moral law, the latter being more distinctly acknowledged by men or reserved character who are chiefly inclined to listen to their

conscience. Frequently turning to his conscience opens to man the way to its mysterious depths, and renders it so clear that the commands of the secret moral law in it become forcibly observable. Therefore, in order for a heathen to turn to God, he must absolutely have an enlightened conscience, as sensitive as must have been the conscience of the wise Socrates, and it is only by this means that a heathen can worship the true God without belonging to the Church, or to the chosen people; but such a turning to one's inner self, to one's conscience, cannot take place without outward causes. Ever since Adam's fall the majority of his descendants have existed exclusively through the relations and impressions of the outward world; only a few have felt anything worthy of notice in their inner self, and still fewer have realised that real blessedness can only proceed from the depths of one's own spirit (John vii. 38, 39; 2 Peter i. 19; Heb. viii. 10-12; Rev. iii. 20; John xv. 7-11). The presence of God can only be felt when the heart is pure; or, more exactly, when the conscience is sensitive (Matt. v. 8; John xiv. 15-21).<sup>1</sup> Therefore, in order to explain clearly the return of Balaam to true religion

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<sup>1</sup> In the Old Testament לֵב or לִב (heart) is considered to be the central point of the vital forces (Gen. xviii. 5; Ps. xxii. 26), and the seat of sensation, feeling, and the different functions of the soul (Lev. xix. 17; Job xxxvii. 1; Stockii *Clav. Ling. Sanctae*; and Steinberg). For this reason the Lord has come to heal the *broken-hearted* (Luke iv. 18); His love is shed in the *hearts* of Christians by the Holy Ghost (Rom. v. 5); He gives the earnest of the Spirit in our *hearts* (2 Cor. i. 22); His light shines in our *hearts* (2 Cor. iv. 6); Christ dwells in the *heart* by faith (Ephes. iii. 17); He puts the Covenant into the *heart* (Heb. x. 16); He searches the reins and *hearts* (Rev. ii. 23); His holy Omnipresence is noticed in the *pure in heart* (Matt. v. 8; 2 Peter i. 19). On the contrary, unbelief, estrangement, unrighteousness proceed from *hearts that have 'waxed gross'* (Matt. xiii. 15); 'hardened' (Mark iii. 5); that are 'far from God' (Matt. xv. 8); from those who are 'uncircumcised,' that is to say, insensible to the voice of grace (Acts vii. 51); from those who 'err in their *hearts*' (Heb. iii. 10). Therefore it is only that which proceeds from the *heart* (Matt. xv. 17-20; Mark vii. 15-23) which defiles a man. Salvation or sanctification thus consists in the purification of the heart, or in its regeneration and renovation. (A great deal is said on this subject in the works of St. Macarius of Egypt, St. Isaac the Syrian, and St. Ephraim the Syrian.)

we must presume in him a certain necessity for worshipping the true God, and the existence of a notion of the true God amongst his countrymen, combined with examples of pure moral service of God, also the occurrence of events contemporary with Balaam which caused the omnipotent relationship of God to the Universe to have been particularly manifest.

First of all it is necessary, to bear in mind that heathen antiquity was not entirely devoid of divine revelation and communication. 'We feel everywhere a certain craving after a Unity into which all the various gods of the universe might flow together; a foreboding sensation of a Power which rises above the world, where reigns the power of material objects and phenomena; this presentiment expressly shows itself in the position ascribed to Jupiter as the head of all the family of the gods, as well as in the perception of the gods in general as personal moral beings, and in the acknowledgment of a bond of relationship between the human and divine spirit'<sup>1</sup> (Acts xvii. 23). But besides these cravings after the ideal in Balaam, as a magian it is very possible that he was also stimulated by purely practical impulses. It is quite justifiable to suppose that, notwithstanding his uncommon abilities and proficiency in the arts of magic and mantology, Balaam may have in some cases met with failure, and that his exorcisms and predictions were not always successful. Such failures must have been very painful to one conscious of his spiritual superiority and perfect knowledge of the mysterious sciences and ceremonies; the more so, that failure in the case of any powerful clients might endanger not only fortune and honour, but life itself (Dan. ii. 5-12). The dissatisfaction caused by failures may have raised in the course of time a feeling of doubt in the power of the divine executors of these exorcisms and adjurations. Balaam's gifts and social position could only have increased such a doubt, as in virtue of his gifts he possessed

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<sup>1</sup> Koehler, *Prophetismus*, p. 73.

a love of knowledge, which had been still further developed by the study of Chaldean wisdom, and had received fresh food from his frequent intercourse with foreign nations, who made him acquainted with their religious creeds and mythology.<sup>1</sup> It is well known that Balaam's native country, Aram-Harran (Northern Mesopotamia, situated in a part whence branched off many military and commercial highways leading to the celebrated fords of the Tigris and Euphrates), was a territory which served as a point of contact for the military intercourse and culture of the nations of anterior Asia with those of north-east Africa, the Assyrio-Babylonians, and the Egyptians. The instability of the political frontiers at that period, the tendency to look out for better places to settle in, the slavery which existed, the slave-trade, and the military right of taking as many prisoners as possible in times of war, and transplanting conquered nations in masses into the lands of the conquerors,—these are all reasons which, combined, must have naturally rendered Harran a meeting-place where emigrants of different tribes and nations intermingled; the more so, as northern Mesopotamia always belonged to the different powerful nations which succeeded each other, viz.—the Hittites, the Assyrians, and the Babylonians.<sup>2</sup> Owing to these historical conditions, and his social position, Balaam might easily have become acquainted with the respective creeds of this mixed population in order to increase his fame and add to his powers of enchantment. Balaam must therefore have considered it indispensable to acquaint himself with the different religions of the surrounding tribes, and to appear as far as possible to be fully conversant with such subjects. This knowledge, which gave him weight and importance in the eyes of the surrounding

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<sup>1</sup> It seems to us that Balaam's personality is represented here from a point of view which agrees with his character and position, and necessarily proceeds from the above-mentioned facts and arguments.

<sup>2</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, p. 306.



population, may have also been one of the causes to awaken doubts as to the justness of these different representations of the Divinity. The questions as to the relation in which the gods of one nation stand to the gods of another, whether they are equal, or subject to one another, or dependent on each other, which are the highest, greatest, strongest, most powerful, must have all the more naturally suggested themselves in such a case, as, according to the testimony of the most ancient chronicles, the Assyrian, Egyptian, and Hittite kings were very religious, and carried on wars in the name of their gods, to whom also they attributed their victories.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the uncertain and fluctuating success in the struggles of the various nations against each other under the reigns of their different kings and dynasties showed that, at certain times, the success of a nation might depend less on the gods than on the personal qualities of the sovereign. Otherwise it would have been difficult to explain the causes of defeats and to decide why the gods had refused their assistance in certain cases, whether from ill-will or impotence. The latter view seems to preponderate, as the ancient conquerors, for instance the Assyrian kings, used, in cases of victory over any renowned people, to carry away the national gods as prisoners, and thus insulted them and caused them to lose their worshippers.<sup>2</sup> There are two consequences, which may be considered as the usual results of doubts concerning the justness of different opinions as to the nature of the Divinity and its connection with the world:—Some become indifferent to religion in general; others, who are doubtful of one religious form, begin to re-examine and to verify different creeds. The first case, that of total indifference, generally occurs with persons absorbed by social or private life, or with those who give themselves up to a worldly life and sensual pleasures. The second case is generally that

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<sup>1</sup> Astafiev, N., *Antiquities*, pp. 158, 159.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 88, 89.

of persons who are placed by their birth and position in close connection with religious questions, or of chosen natures who manifest religious tendencies from their birth. Evidently in virtue of special circumstances, Balaam belonged to the second group, and therefore might sincerely and seriously proceed to the verifying of his own and others' religious opinions.

§ 7. How should we represent the different religions which existed in Balaam's time in anterior Asia, and particularly in Harran?

The substance of the different creeds which were subjected to Balaam's examination may be briefly noticed as follows:—

According to the testimony of the ancient monuments, the central point of the Semitic religion in general, and particularly that of Balaam's countrymen, the Harranites, was the recognition of one infinitely high, supreme, self-conscious Divinity.<sup>1</sup> 'The religion of Assyria and Babylon,' says Lenormant, 'presented a great similarity to the Egyptian and other religions of the pagan world, both in its fundamental elements and in the general spirit with which its theories were imbued. If we penetrate through the exterior envelope of coarse polytheism, in which this religion has been clothed by popular superstitions, and raise ourselves to perceptions of a higher order, and consider them as the real point of departure, we shall there discover the fundamental notion of Divine Unity, the last remnant of primordial revelation, mutilated by the monstrous inventions of Pantheism.'<sup>2</sup> 'At the basis of the Kushite and all other religions,' says Maspero, 'we find a god, who at the same time is one and multifarious: one, because matter proceeds from him, and he blends himself with matter; multifarious, because every act which he commits in himself over matter is considered the production of a distinct being

<sup>1</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, p. 112; Bishop Chrysanthus, *Religions of the Ancient World*, ii. pp. 212, 215.

<sup>2</sup> Lenormant, *Manuel d'histoire ancienne*, 4th edition, ii. pp. 180, 181.

bearing a separate name. In the beginning these separate beings were not yet classified according to the degrees of a regular hierarchy; they existed without being subject to each other, and each was pre-eminently worshipped either in certain towns or by certain nations. Anu was worshipped in Uruk, Bel in Ninura, Sin in Ura, and Marduk in Babylon. Anu, Bel, Sin, and Marduk represent one and the same being; but this single being, who bears so many different names, has a double nature, and unites in one and the same person the two principles which are indispensable for every production: namely, the male and the female principles. Each god is doubled by the corresponding goddess: Anu and Sin by the goddess Nana, Bel by Belita, Marduk by Tsarpanita. The divine beings are not comprehended singly, but under the aspect of pairs; and every pair formed by them is but the expression of the primordial One God, notwithstanding the duality of its nature, in the same manner as God is one, notwithstanding His many appellations.<sup>1</sup> The supreme God, the first and highest principle, the only beginning from which all the other gods proceeded, was Ilu (in Akkadian, Dingira), therefore, as the name itself shows, "God by pre-eminence" (κατ' ἐξοχήν). He is alone and good, and the Neoplatonists say of Him that He is the source of all things in the Chaldean theology.<sup>2</sup>

Over and above the testimonies contained in the ancient writings, the existence of monotheism in anterior Asia is confirmed by the fact that this creed was professed by several persons mentioned in the Bible. Such was Abraham's contemporary Melchizedek, king of Salem, who inhabited Palestine and was priest of the most high God (Gen. xiv. 18-20). He was probably a worshipper of Ilu, 'the God by pre-eminence,' the most high God, the good and only One. Abimelech, king of Gerar, another contemporary of Abraham, also worshipped one God, as He came to him in a dream (Gen.

<sup>1</sup> Maspero, *Histoire*, pp. 148, 149; cf. Duncker, *Geschichte des alten Test.* p. 201, 4te Auflage.

<sup>2</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, p. 113.

xx. 3). Abimelech calls him 'Lord,' and does not speak of Him as of Abraham's God, but as of God in general, in relation to all (Gen. xxi. 22, 23, xxvi. 28). In later times another worshipper of 'God by pre-eminence' was Laban, who inhabited Mesopotamia, namely, Harran (Aram) (Gen. xxxi. 49: —'The Lord watch between me and thee,' יְהוָה 50, 53), who at the same time worshipped idols (Gen. xxxi. 19, 32-35), that is, lower gods (of the second order), Teraphims. Still later, about the time of Moses, we meet with worshippers of monotheism in Job and his four friends—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, Zophar the Naamathite, and Elihu (Job ii. 11, iv., v., viii., xi., xviii., xx., xxii., xxv., xxxii.-xxxvii.)—who inhabited the plain, situated between the Euphrates, Palestine, and Idumæa. Some of the magi also professed the same convictions, such as Osthanes, or Hosthanes, who lived in the time of Xerxes, and wrote principally about magic, which he introduced amongst the Greeks (Plin., *H. N.*, 30, 2). The fathers of the Church attribute to him the knowledge of God and His angels (Cyprianus, *De vanitate idolorum*, p. 4; Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, p. 26). This occurred also amongst the Chaldeans. Justin, in his exhortation to the heathens (ii. 24), cites the sentence of an ancient oracle, according to which the Chaldeans and Hebrews were the only people who rightly recognised and worshipped God.<sup>1</sup>

The above-mentioned facts show indubitably that the principle of monotheism was never quite extinguished in anterior Asia, so that it not only formed the fundamental basis of theology in the schools of the priests, but was also transmitted by the invisible threads of living tradition from some persons to others not even outside Abraham's family. Aram or Harran, the place of residence of Balaam, was particularly well situated for the preservation of the religion of monotheism; it was the home of Laban, a worshipper of the true God; and

<sup>1</sup> See Knobel, *Ex. Handb.* xxii. zu Num. pp. 130, 131.

the prolonged stay there of the patriarch Jacob, a faithful follower of the God of his fathers, was probably not without influence in enlightening the inhabitants of Haran as to the knowledge of the personality of the almighty God of Abraham. Jacob doubtlessly related more than once to his relations, neighbours, and household the wonderful revelations of God and the acts of protection shown by the Lord to Abraham and Isaac. These events were too wonderful, too much out of the ordinary, to be passed over in silence or forgotten, and must have been handed down from one generation to the second, to the third, and so on, so that these revelations were probably known to many of the Haranites, and their tradition preserved for whole centuries, even up to Balaam's time. On the other hand, Balaam, as a famous magian, must evidently have often received many who sought his wise counsels and miraculous assistance, and in conversation about the mysterious divinities he must have heard narratives of the saving miracles worked by God in favour of Abraham's race. The Chaldean magic, founded on a more or less pure perception of the Divinity, may have also assisted Balaam in this respect; for it was something quite separate from the necromancy which then existed, and the aim of which was to injure men by the help of the evil spirits. The Chaldean magic, on the contrary, was considered divine and beneficial; it was founded on the recognition of a most high beneficent Divinity, and aimed only at the removal of injurious and impure phenomena, demoniacal possession, diseases, misfortunes, destructive influences, deleterious winds, malevolent sorcerers, and witches. Its fundamental idea was the representation of the happy and salutary government of the world by the two good supreme gods, Anu and Ea.<sup>1</sup> These divinities keep in check the destructive and deadly actions of the kingdom of evil spirits, annul the results of their fatal influence, and lead to happiness. The substance of magic,

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<sup>1</sup> See above.

exorcisms, purifications, and mystical ceremonies were discovered by the god of wisdom, Ea, and derive their importance from the invincible power of Anu, which rests in the 'mysterious' divine name, known only to the divinity Ea; the latter, as the good providence of the earth, maintains, by the help of this 'wonderful' force, order and prosperity on earth, which the evil spirits endeavour to destroy. With such notions it was evidently not difficult to enter the path of true religion. First of all, the above represented perception of the Divinity is near to the truth, for it attributes to God good, and not evil, and the principal cause of man's fall, errors, and estrangement from the True God lies in the attribution of evil to God or disbelief in His goodness; secondly, the Chaldean magic operations proceeded from a desire for good, therefore from a moral source; and the desire for good is not only approved by conscience, but also enlightens it, and thus opens to man the comprehension of the moral law, which is a certain reasonable force; moreover, it proceeds from the God of truth, and is His revelation. Therefore the perception of the moral law in the conscience is the approach of man to God, his return to Him, not in the sense of space, but in a moral sense, that is to say, in that of assimilation, of union.

Such were the characteristic features of the religious creeds professed by the separate individuals and the tribes amongst whom Balaam had grown up and passed his life. It is evident that in the position which he occupied, and with his extraordinary gifts, the result of the examination of these creeds must have been to arouse a conviction in the truth and power over the universe of the One all-comprehensive Ilu;<sup>1</sup> although such a conviction is still insufficient in order to seek the Lord's advice in particular emergencies and to be worthy of

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<sup>1</sup> In the estimation of heathen religions, and of different creeds in general, it is important to bear in view the qualities attributed to the Divinity and not the name itself; for the Hebrew אלהים, the Chaldean Ilu, and the Greek *θεός*, may signify both the One true God, and also false gods.

receiving revelations from Him, as was the case with Balaam (Num. xxii. 8-12, 19, 20; Deut. xxiii. 5), for only the pure in heart shall see God (Matt. v. 8), for the Lord is nigh only to those that call upon Him in truth, and only hears the cry of them that fear Him (Ps. cxlv. 18, 19). And His commandments are truth (Ps. cxix. 142-151), the expression of His moral being. Therefore Balaam's appeal to the True God can only be explained by the supposition that his aspirations were to worship the Supreme Ilu in spirit and in truth. But is such an inclination possible in heathenism? 'It may be said that the heathen religions sanctified, in like manner, both the higher aspirations of man and the coarse instincts through which his passions were developed. Even there, where a strict distinction was made between good and evil, as in the religion of Iran, evil, though expelled from life, was still considered both natural and indispensable, and therefore was attributed to a divinity of evil, which was separate from the god of good.'<sup>1</sup> The ancient wise men and so-called 'prophets' of Chaldea and Babylon affirmed that real evil does not exist in the world, and that apparent evil is only relative, and, like everything in the world, proceeds by immutable laws; although, at the same time, evil serves as a punishment of our sins. Other ancient Chaldean 'prophets' went still farther, and affirmed that everything happened in the world in consequence of eternal and unchangeable laws, and without any reference to human virtues or vices.<sup>2</sup> The moral standard of morality in Babylon seems to have been very low. The nation was given up to sensuality, and was by no means remarkable for humanity, as the Egyptians were. The worship of the male divinities was, for instance, characterised by cruelty, and that of the goddesses Belita and Istar Tsarpanit by open debauchery.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Chrysanthus, *Religions of the Ancient World*, iii. p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* ii. p. 262.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* ii. p. 266.

Together, and side by side with this strange and coarsely sensual creed, some of the Chaldeans professed another form of worship of a totally opposite character. This peculiarity was not exclusively limited to the kingdom of Babylon. It is also to be met with in the history of other countries, and can be psychologically explained. The fragments of the ancient Babylonian writings certify to the existence in Babylon of a purely ascetic creed. According to these documents, the religion of Saturn was founded on totally different moral principles; it was directed against sensuality, and exacted abstinences from its followers. It spread far beyond the limits of Babylon. What is still more remarkable was the preaching of the doctrine of the incorruptibility of the body under the conditions of a virtuous life, frequent prayers, fasting, and abstinence. This doctrine went again side by side with the most naturalistic views concerning the means of preserving the body.<sup>1</sup> The sense of sin and of righteousness was inherent in the Mesopotamian nations. 'May the sinner bear the weight of his trespasses, the blasphemer the weight of his blasphemy; may the righteous not be destroyed below, the believer not be exterminated,' are words taken from the narrative of the deluge described in the cuneiform inscriptions.<sup>2</sup> It is evident from a fragment of a work on magic that, according to the opinion of the magi, 'a sufferer is delivered from the demons who persecute him, and is cured of his diseases not by outward means, but by the penitent acknowledgment of the offences he has committed and by sincere repentance, which gives guarding power and efficacy to the purificatory ceremonies.'<sup>3</sup> Diseases are considered in the light of a punishment for sins and impiety. Pardon can only be obtained in such cases by penitence, or by imploring the divine mercy, and by sincere humility.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Chrysanthus, *Religions of the Ancient World*, ii. p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> Lapoukhine, A. P., *Biblical History*, i. p. 170.

<sup>3</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 61.



Penitential acts occupied a prominent place amongst the religious customs of the Chaldeans. Fragments have been handed down to us of a separate collection of prayers, written in the old primitive Akkadian text with an interlinear Assyrian translation, under the general title of *Sighs of a Penitent Heart*.<sup>1</sup> They express a deep consciousness of sinfulness, consciousness of God's wrath, despair of pardon and salvation, and an entreaty for the purification of the heart. Pious thoughts, such as the following, are to be met with in these penitential prayers:—

‘My Lord! may the wrathfulness of his heart be appeased.  
 God, who knows what is hidden, may he grow merciful.  
 I taste the food of wrathfulness,  
 I drink the water of heart's anguish.  
 On the crime against my God  
 Do I feed by ignorance.  
 In the crime (trespass) against my goddess  
 I advance by ignorance.  
 My Lord! my vices are most great,  
 My sins are most great.  
 My God! my errors are very great,  
 Very great are my sins.  
 God, who knows what is hidden,  
 My iniquities are very great, very great are my sins.  
 I commit iniquities by ignorance,  
 I commit sins imperceptibly.  
 The Lord, in the anger of his heart,  
 Strikes me with confusion.  
 God, who knows what is hidden,  
 Oppresses me.  
 I bow down in humility,  
 And nobody gives me a hand.  
 I melt into tears,  
 And nobody takes me by the hand.

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<sup>1</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, p. 62.

I cry out in prayer,  
And nobody hears me.  
I am weakened, crushed,  
And nobody redeems me.  
I draw near to God my Creator,  
And express my grief in burning words.  
Lord, have mercy.  
Goddess, have mercy.  
God, who knowest what is hidden, have mercy.  
Goddess, who knowest what is hidden, have mercy.  
Lord, do not reject thy slave,  
Amidst the stormy waves hasten to his help,  
Lay hold of him by the hand.  
I commit sins,  
Turn them into piety;  
I commit crimes,  
Scatter them by the wind.  
My blasphemies are very great,  
Tear them asunder like a veil.  
O my God! my sins are seven times seven,  
Forgive my sins!  
Goddess, who knowest what is hidden,  
My sins, which are seven times seven, forgive my sins.  
Forgive my vices,  
Proclaim thy judgment.'<sup>1</sup>

This short outline of the moral tone and pious customs of the Semitic tribes of Mesopotamia is sufficient proof that these nations possessed in their midst men endowed with aspirations which likened them to the righteous men of the chosen people. Balaam may have been one of these exclusive personalities, a man with broad views and a sensitive heart. As a magian, and therefore devout by profession, he must have had opportunities of learning from the kindred magi

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<sup>1</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, pp. 63-67.

surrounding him the different penitential rites, prayers, fasts, and works of abstinence. And although purity of heart and inward nearness to God are the natural results of such discipline, still a heathen like Balaam, unblessed with divine grace, may in moral respects not stand higher than those whose spiritual life is like 'to smoking flax and a bruised reed shaken by the wind' (Matt. xii. 20).

§ 8. In this condition of mind God could only have been to Balaam the 'Unknown God' (Acts xvii. 23), sought for and dimly felt. In order to have a right representation of the nature of God, and therefore to justly distinguish between the commandments of God and the inspirations of evil, it is necessary to have living evidence (seeing or hearing) of the Revelation of the Divinity and manifestations of His power. In Balaam's times such facts had really taken place, and their fame had spread afar. They were the tokens and miracles of Jehovah in the land of Egypt and in the field of Zoan (Ps. lxxviii. 43) when He led the Hebrews forth from the house of labour. The different events which accompanied the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt must have become known through the Amalekites, who maintained a constant commercial intercourse with Egypt, and whose caravans had tried to stop the Israelites in the desert when they were on their way to Horeb. They were also known from the Canaanites and the family of Zophar, who lived in the mountains (Num. xiv. 45), and the voice of rumour thus penetrated into 'the great water circle of the land of Naharain' (Brugsch), and reached the ears of Balaam. He may have also gleaned certain information from the earlier, during the first five years, prisoners and slaves who had been taken or purchased in Mesopotamia during the war of Rameses II. (the Great) with King Hita, and had fled from Egypt back to Mesopotamia in order to escape the heavy works.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the inhabitants of Mesopotamia,

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<sup>1</sup> Brugsch, *Egypt*, pp. 467-483, 493-495.

like Balaam, may have also heard of these events from the nations adjoining Egypt and from different persons on whom the wonders of the departure had produced a striking impression (Exod. xv. 14 ; Josh. v. 1 ; Exod. xviii. 1 ; Josh. ii. 9). The account of the wonderful works of Jehovah revived in the memories of the people ancient tales of the miraculous deeds of the gods manifested during the deluge and destruction of the tower of Babel,<sup>1</sup> and reminded them of the legendary miracles of the almighty, magic, 'Great and mysterious name.'<sup>2</sup> All these different reports were sufficient to stimulate the inquiring and sensitive mind of Balaam, and to induce him to seek more exact and circumstantial information concerning the wonderful events which had occurred at the time of the Israelites' departure from Egypt. These narratives and this information bore witness that the real and sole author of the deluge and destruction of the tower of Babel was no other than He, Who miraculously led the descendants of Jacob out from the land of Egypt. Thus the narratives current in Haran concerning the personal, manifest protection of God (Elohim) to Abraham and his descendants appeared to Balaam as perfectly authentic. The truth of these communications was sufficiently confirmed by the fact that the Creator of the miracles in Egypt and on the field of Zoan was principally called Jahve, יהוה, Who is, was, and will be. This name may have appeared the more real and inspiring to Balaam's soul, as the beneficent deeds of its divine Bearer were very similar to those of the 'almighty, magic, Great name, Highest name,' acknowledged in Mesopotamia, and before which, according to the belief of the magi, all bowed down, in heaven, on earth, and under the earth ; a force which restrains the destructive influence of the evil spirits, and even fetters

<sup>1</sup> See narratives about the deluge and destruction of the tower of Babel preserved by the Chaldeo-Assyrians in the *Biblic. Hist. of Lapoukhine*, i. pp. 167, 219, and in Astafiev's *Antiquities*, pp. 51-59.

<sup>2</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, pp. 31-34.

the gods and forces them to submission.<sup>1</sup> 'This is the 'Mysterious name,' which is never spoken, and which will remain for ever the mystery of Ea.<sup>2</sup> It was regarded as a real divine hypostasis, having a personal existence, and power over the gods of a lower rank, over nature, and the world of spirits.<sup>3</sup> Balaam may have come to the conclusion that 'the great name' had manifested itself in the wonderful deliverance of the Israelites under the name of יהוה. In virtue of this, he may easily have acquired faith in the God of Israel, and have felt the want of worshipping Him and of acquiring His favour and assistance in cases where natural magic force was incapable of averting evil, or warning against impending calamity. It was desirable for Balaam to gain such a helper, for he had to deal chiefly with the manifestations of the evil which prevails in the world, with questions as to the issue of mortal strife between separate individuals and whole nations, with cases of painful uncertainty and overwhelming doubt as to what is 'to be or not to be'; in general with phenomena, to which he could not be indifferent, given the sensitiveness of his nature and his profession of magian. But how the Lord revealed Himself to Balaam as the Living God Who reigns over the world, when and in what vision, is a question which is not mentioned in the Holy Scriptures.

This is the means by which, in all probability, faith of the true God dawned on the soul of the Soothsayer Balaam; the fact itself of his conversion and of his confessing the God of Israel is placed beyond all doubt by the testimony of different passages of the Bible, *e.g.* Num. xxii. 8, 13, 19, 38, xxiv. 4, 16. From these testimonies it is evident that Balaam

<sup>1</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, p. 43. The highest and most invincible power lies in the mysterious divine name, 'the great name,' 'the highest name,' known to Ea alone. 'Everything bows down before this name in heaven, on earth, and in the world under the earth; it can curb the Maskims, and checks their devastations. This name even fetters the gods and obliges them to submit.'

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 105.

recognised the God of Israel as his only God, and in his actions conformed to His will (as in the case of Melchizedek, king of Salem, Job, and others); he appealed to Him in certain cases of necessity, and found it expedient to announce his own decisions and actions, as inspired and sanctified by the name of God. This is perhaps the conclusive motive which served to establish the fame of the Soothsayer Balaam of Pethor in Mesopotamia, and to spread it abroad over all the precincts of anterior Asia.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE TRIAL AND THE WARNING

*Numbers* xxii. 8-41.

§ 1. THE preceding chapters constitute, properly speaking, an explanation of the first seven verses of the twenty-second chapter of the Book of Numbers. The succeeding verses, 8-41, of the same chapter already record the events which preceded and determined the arrival of the magian Balaam into the land of Moab, with the object of cursing the Israelites. The negotiations of Balaam with the Moabite messengers are contained in verses 8-20, and the apparition of the Angel to Balaam on his way from Mesopotamia to the land of Moab in verses 21-35, whilst verses 36-41 describe the reception of Balaam by the Moabite king Balak and the preparation for cursing the Israelites. Notwithstanding the apparent simplicity of the narrative, this passage has long called forth numerous misconceptions. Several ancient commentators of the Bible (the Blessed Theodoritus) and some of the modern (De Geer) have expressed a doubt whether Balaam's religious feeling was so strong that he did not dare curse the Israelites without first referring to the true God. For if he really did nothing without God's consent, how could he have dared to appeal to Him a second time for permission (ver. 19)? Is it to be supposed that he really feared God when he found it necessary to go against God's commands in view of the rewards and honours promised him by the Moabite king? Doubts have also been raised (suggested by the critics of the rationalistic

school) as to the contents of the verses 12, 20, 22, 34, and 35; for in the 12th verse God forbids Balaam to go with the Moabite messengers, in the 20th He permits it, and then His anger is again kindled, and He sends His Angel with a drawn sword to stand in Balaam's way as an adversary against him (ver. 22); and when Balaam, frightened by the vision of the Angel, wishes to turn back (ver. 34), the Angel orders him to go to Moab and to do that which will be commanded unto him (ver. 35). Finally, many commentators of the Bible of various tendencies find something strange and unprecedented, even from a Biblical point of view, in the passage (vers. 22-35) in which the sacred historian narrates the apparition to Balaam of Jehovah's Angel with a drawn sword, and the conversation of the Angel and the ass with Balaam. This makes Lutheran theologians of orthodox tendencies incline to the interpretation of these events in the sense of a vision, similar to a hallucination; while learned rationalists, on their part, do not find this passage in accordance with what precedes (Bauer, *Geschichte der alten Weissag.* p. 333); they regard it as improbable and useless, and therefore maintain that the whole episode (vers. 22-35) is an insertion of a later period (Hoffmann in the *Hallesche Encycl. v. Ersch und Gruber*, p. 184), forming a poetical (figurative) representation of the discord in Balaam's soul between the divine voice (his conscience) and the thirst for gold and honours (Oort, p. 58). The biblicist Bauer considers that all the arguments put forth by men of science of the Western world to remove the above-cited misconceptions have not in the least done away with the contradiction existing between the episode of the speaking ass and the preceding events. 'If Balaam,' says Bauer, 'after having declared in the most decided manner that he could not do anything against the word of God, and made everything depend on the divine will, receives the distinct permission (xxii. 20) to go with the messengers of Balak, with the sole condition of doing as God said unto him, and then shortly after (ver. 22) God's anger is kindled because Balaam



went, and he has to be brought to reason by the words of the ass, and that with the sole object of receiving again the same permission, worded nearly in the same terms—then this is a distinct discordance. And if the 20th is compared with the 35th verse, it is easy to see how the thread of the narrative, interrupted by the inserted passage, is again taken up, so that the omission of the verses 22-35 renders the narrative more coherent' (Bauer, *Geschichte der alten Weissag.* p. 333, note 32). It is true that all these misconceptions and objections may be regarded as mere cavil upon the part of learned Lutheran pedants; but still it is impossible to deny that the moral and psychological connection between the events related in verses 8-35 is so far concealed from the reader's eye as to leave him no other issue than either to accept them without explanation, in spite of the fact of God's boundless condescension to Balaam, and the great incredible audacity of the latter in addressing his insolent and vain appeals to the Supreme, Righteous, and Inaccessible Being, or to attempt to explain these events by a psychological hypothesis, *built partly on the foundation of the necessary inward relation between the characters of the narrative, partly drawn from analogous situations of other individuals mentioned in the Bible, partly also based on the latest archæological discoveries of learned Orientalists in Assyria and Egypt.* To leave this passage without an explanation would be ill-advised, especially as even teachers of the Church (the Blessed Theodoritus and St. Augustine) recognised the necessity of clearing up the doubts which naturally arose in their minds as to how Balaam, being a magian, appealed to God; or why God, having ordered Balaam not to go, afterwards ordered him to go? (Num. xxii. 19, 20, *et seq.*)

Is it, however, possible that such an explanation should also be a refutation of the objections put forward by the scholars of the rationalistic school? We are inclined to think that it is possible. Objections directed against the Holy Scriptures,

which are divinely inspired and absolutely true, must be regarded as the fruits of thoughtlessness, as an incapacity of attaining with 'the fleshly mind' blinded by sins (Col. ii. 18) the true sense of the Scriptures, which lies concealed under the cover of the letter. Therefore the best means of refuting the objections of scientists is to follow the example of the Holy Apostle (see polemical epistles of St. Paul to the Galatians, Colossians, and Hebrews), and of the Fathers of the Church, by means of the exposition of the corresponding truths. The most probable explanation of the passage referred to appears to us the following description of the circumstances, which called forth the events described in verses 8-35.

§ 2. The above-mentioned embassy of the king of Moab came to the celebrated Mesopotamian magian Balaam in the hope that by means of his exorcisms he would be able to deprive the Israelites of the divine protection, and obtain that these strangers, come from Egypt, should be smitten by misfortunes, that their strength and courage should fail them, and that they should lose their energy to such a degree that the Moabites, as it seemed to them, would succeed in defeating these masses of people, and driving them away from their frontiers far into the desert. Balaam received the messengers courteously, listened to their proposals, and probably accepted their presents, but declared to them that he could not give the desired answer before appealing to God. '*Lodge here this night,*' said he to the messengers, '*and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me: and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam*'<sup>1</sup> (ver. 8). The soothsayer was probably

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<sup>1</sup> According to Hebrew tradition, the messengers from the Midianites departed immediately; however, the fact of their not being mentioned does not exclude the conjecture that it would have been better and safer for them to remain at the magian's, whom they knew personally, together with the elders of Moab. The Midianites were the guarantees for the whole enterprise; in their presence Balaam might have had an empty pretext for appealing to God for permission to send curses and misfortunes on the people come from Egypt (see Romanus Teller, *Die heil. Schrift d. A. B. ad hunc locum*).

well aware of the great difficulty of fulfilling the Moabites' request. It may have been the first time in his exercise of magic and sorcery that he was called upon to curse a whole nation, to paralyse the courage and energy of a warlike race. The messengers had already informed him that this people had come out from Egypt (ver. 5), and at that time Egypt was at the zenith of its power, and the Mesopotamian nations had already frequently experienced the effects of its destructive force.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, in whatever light Balaam may have regarded these emigrants from Egypt, whether they had separated themselves from the Egyptians with Pharaoh's permission, or by means of a struggle, in any case this nation could not have appeared otherwise than formidable and odious to a Mesopotamian who was hostile to Egypt. He may also have been cognisant of the fact that this people was under the special protection of that mysterious One who creates the worlds and governs them; he may also have heard of the wonderful deeds which had led the Israelites out of Egypt, and of the defeat of the Amorite kings Sihon and Og. All this increased the difficulty of fulfilling the Moabites' appeal, and obliged Balaam to have recourse to a Higher Power. On the other hand, it is quite natural that a man of his sensitive nature should be filled with pity for the Moabites, against whom the newcomers had apparently already lifted their terrible sword, and therefore consider it a work of justice to defend the weak and assist those who were on the brink of destruction. The presents which were offered to him may also have been a secret but powerful incentive, as well as the fame which would make his name renowned as far as the coasts of the Dead Sea. However this may have been, his sympathy for the Moabites<sup>2</sup> and the recognition of the

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<sup>1</sup> Brugsch, *Egypt*, pp. 334-340, 440, 441, 442, and others.

<sup>2</sup> Some commentators of the Bible think that Balaam received the Moabite messengers courteously, and expressed his readiness to help them in consequence of his extreme cupidity (Keil and Del. in their commentary on this

difficulty of fulfilling their request determined Balaam to appeal to God. The text does not say in what manner he determined to do so, whether he had recourse to the above-mentioned Chaldean method of seeking God's will during sleep, or whether he appealed to God in spontaneous, ardent, ecstatic prayer. It would appear nearer to the truth to suppose that Balaam appealed to God in prayer during the following night.<sup>1</sup> Night seems the most propitious time

passage). This seems all the more culpable, as, according to their opinion, Balaam must have been acquainted with the history of the Covenant between God and the Israelites (see Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, vol. iii., Book of Numbers xxii. 8, note 3). However, such a point of view is founded on a supposition which remains unproved concerning the means and conditions of Balaam's acquaintance with the history of the Israelites. Meantime, it is beyond doubt that Balaam could hardly have rightly understood the meaning of Jehovah's relations to the chosen people. Israel, from Balaam's point of view, may have appeared quite different than to us; for if the sons of Jacob represent for us the sole chosen people of that time, it does not therefore follow that they appeared so to Balaam. His decision to take the part of the Moabites in their hostile feelings against the chosen people may be very well illustrated by calling to mind the well-known dispute amongst the Apostles as to who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, and the embittered strifes and dissensions which lasted for centuries between the representatives of the various national churches, each of which maintained the infallibility of its doctrines, and prided itself on possessing God's special favour. If indeed some of the most worthy representatives of the Western Church consider themselves and their national Church as the only bearers and exponents of Christianity, and all others, amongst them the children of the Eastern Church, as inferior to them in the matter of Christian life, how then can we expect and require from Balaam that he should look upon the Israelites as the only representatives of the true religion, consider all their actions as infallible, and become the enemy of their enemies?

<sup>1</sup> We can only attribute to a total misconception of Balaam's personality and inability to enter into his position the supposition of De Geer (see *Dissert. de Bil.* pp. 34, 35), that Balaam questioned the Lord by means of doubtful divinations with arrows, by casting lots, etc., so that he did not really intend to appeal at all to God, but simply pretended to do so, so as to enhance his authority. If Balaam had not actually expected an answer from God, his cupidity would have prevented him from acknowledging the reality of the divine manifestation, which De Geer himself admits, and would not have gone with the Moabites. The messengers of Balak exposed the reasons of their call in such a manner that there was no reason for Balaam to refuse, even as a matter of form, particularly if we keep in mind his failing of cupidity, by which De Geer wishes to explain his conduct, described in verses

for such a matter; there is a cessation of human activity; in the darkness and stillness the impressions of the outer world diminish; it is easier to concentrate the thoughts and turn in spirit to the Invisible Orderer of human destinies. It was for this reason that the heathen Chaldeans believed that the Divinity revealed itself in the night, during sleep, and predicted the future. The Lord appeared to Abimelech in a dream (Gen. xx. 3), to Laban (Gen. xxxi. 24), to Solomon (1 Kings iii. 5, 15, ix. 2-4), to the prophet Daniel (Dan. vii.), and to others. The revelation of God to the prophets in visions and dreams is recognised as the usual form (Num. xii. 6). The divine revelation in nightly visions was received by Abraham (Gen. xv. 12), Samuel (1 Sam. iii. 3), and Nathan (2 Sam. vii. 4). In the Book of Job (xxxiii. 14-18) the communication of divine revelations in dreams, visions, and in a state of ecstasy is considered usual. Balaam therefore did not see the necessity of abandoning this universal method of interrogating the Divinity.<sup>1</sup> And the Almighty, Who sees the paths which lead man to salvation, deigned to appear to Balaam with the object of a trial. '*And God came unto Balaam,*' says the sacred historian expressively, '*and said, What men are these with you?*' This manifestation of

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8-35 of the 22nd chapter of the Book of Numbers. The Blessed Theodorus affirms, in his *Commentary on the Book of Numbers* (quest. 39), 'that Balaam did not appeal to the true God, but received the answer of God, whom he had not invoked, and who was even unknown to him.' He bases this affirmation on the fact that God, when He appears to Balaam, instead of a direct answer, saying, 'Go, or do not go, with the Moabites to curse the Israelites,' inquires of Balaam about the object of the Moabite messengers' arrival, thus intimating that He had not heard Balaam's request for permission to curse the Israelites, as his prayer was addressed to false gods. Such a representation, however, could only have been valid if it were proved that Balaam had worshipped false gods, and had no right to be ranked amongst the worshippers of the true God, such as the righteous Job, Melchizedek, and others, who did not belong to the chosen people. We have already shown that it is much nearer to the truth to represent Balaam as a worshipper of the true God.

<sup>1</sup> De Geer, *Dissert. de Bil.* p. 35. Balaam saw visions in the day, falling into a heavy trance, as described in the Book of Numbers xxiv. 3-10.

the Lord is described here in the same words as the appearance of God to Abimelech (Gen. xx. 3) and to Laban (Gen. xxxi. 24), '*And God came.*' Only there it was unexpected, whilst here it was expected with assurance. God came to Abimelech and Laban in their dreams, whilst in the present case it apparently occurred in a peculiar condition of semi-consciousness between sleep and watchfulness. This spiritual condition may have been similar to that described by one of Job's friends, Eliphaz: '*In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice*' . . . (Job iv. 13-16). At all events, God or His Angel appeared to Balaam,<sup>1</sup> and desiring to straightly express His disapprobation of the matter to which Balaam referred, sternly asked, '*What men are these with thee?*' (ver. 9.)<sup>2</sup> Balaam gives a short answer, in which he indicates the cause and object of the

<sup>1</sup> Under the name of God, His Angel is generally here meant (*Criticorum Sacror. sive annotatorum ad Pentat.* vol. i. pars sec., Vatablus ad Num. xxii. 3).

<sup>2</sup> The warning sternness of the tone has been noticed long ago (see Hengstenberg, *Geschichte Bil.*) The expression 'what' is a free translation from the Hebrew. In the Samaritan text, instead of מִי (who) is written מָה (what), and is translated according to the Vulgate: 'What do they want, why?' This was probably the interpretation of the Septuagint τί, Slavonic ЧТО. The correctness of this reading is confirmed by Balaam's answer according to the Vulgate Onkelos, Samarit. Syrian: 'Balak, the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent' (them is omitted, for not the messengers but the object of their expedition is the chief matter) 'unto me . . . come now, curse me them,' therefore he puts forward the cause and aim of their coming, and not the importance of their social position, and therefore the signification corresponds properly speaking to the word מָה (why), and not to מִי (who). This interpretation gives the appropriate sternness to God's words, and seems more fitting than the Russian *kakie* (what), because it is not the elders of Moab themselves who are displeasing to the Lord, but the aim of their journey; that is, to induce Balaam to curse the people of Israel. He asks the question, not because the reason of their coming is unknown to Him, but in order to give His commands according to the magian's answer (The Blessed Theodoritus, *Commentary on the Book of Numbers*, quest. 39, p. 219).

coming of the Moabite messengers (vers. 10, 11). He evidently wishes to dispose the Lord in favour of the Moabites, by putting forward the danger with which they are threatened by the unjust behaviour of 'the people come out of Egypt,' and Balak's just efforts to save his people from the bitter fate which had just overtaken the Amorite king, Sihon, and Og, king of Bashan, from the hands of the Israelites. But the Judge of the universe, '*that pierces the reins and the heart*,' is not touched by these representations. The Lord knows that the Israelites are forbidden to touch the territory of the sons of Lot, therefore that the fears of the Moabites, as well as their message to Balaam, are vain. Therefore, by virtue of His love for the descendants of Abraham, the Lord forbids Balaam to go to the land of Moab with the object of cursing the chosen and blessed sons of Israel: '*And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed*' (ver. 12).

All this occurred in the night (cf. ver. 13). In the morning Balaam rose and announced to the princes of Balak, with ill-concealed regret,<sup>1</sup> that they must return to their native country without any results, as the Lord, without whose

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<sup>1</sup> It is true that these details are not mentioned in the text of the Bible; but it is not the text itself that we expound, but its explanation. Such a mode of development has already been adopted by the Fathers of the Church, as, for instance, St. John Chrysostom, who frequently entered into details which are not mentioned in the Bible, with the object of giving a better explanation of the passage under comment. We can cite as an example the *Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, xix. 8 in which St. John Chrysostom mentions the striking beauty of the daughters of Lot, of which nothing is said in the Bible (see *Works of St. John Chrysostom*, vol. iv. Book II. p. 481, edition of the Theological Academy of St. Petersburg, 1898). Neither do we find it mentioned in the Bible that our first parents Adam and Eve before their fall emitted rays of light, in consequence of their intercourse with the Lord of Light, so that those rays served both as clothing and an ornament, of which they were deprived after their fall (*Works of St. John Chrysostom*, vol. iv. Book I. Conference 18th, p. 156). Meanwhile, the indication of this glorious and luminous clothing perfectly explains why, after their fall, Adam and Eve felt ashamed of their nakedness (Gen. iii. 7-10).

permission Balaam could do neither good nor evil, had refused him leave to go with them (ver. 13). We have no information as to how the Moabite messengers received Balaam's answer. It may be supposed, however, that Balaam's refusal was given in a tone which clearly showed the Moabite messengers that his desire was to fulfil Balak's request.<sup>1</sup> This is, so far, probable, as Balaam's sympathy could not have been otherwise than aroused in favour of the Moabites, knowing them to be doomed to destruction, in accordance with the military laws of the ancient East. To this must be added the very possible hatred of the Mesopotamian to the strangers come out from the detested Egypt. Balaam seems to have been so grievously overwhelmed by the Lord's decision that he did not even wish to explain to the Moabites that the God whom he confessed was quite independent of the will of His worshippers, that nothing could be done in opposition to Him, and that the very people 'come out of Egypt' enjoyed His special favour and protection. This was perhaps the first time when Balaam's passion for money and honours was sharply manifested, and that he felt the burden of depending on the will of a mysterious Divinity. Anyhow, the Moabite messengers rose up and departed on their way back with increased speed, so that in the course of ten days '*they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us*' (Num. xxii. 14).

§ 3. The report of the messengers to Balak must, of course, in reality have been more circumstantial. Balaam's manifest sympathy for their difficult position could not have escaped the notice of the more discerning of the Moabite messengers, and they doubtlessly mentioned the fact to their king. On the other hand, it was quite possible for Balak to suppose, according to the religious opinions of the heathens at that time, that Balaam was capable of compelling his Divine Protector to act

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<sup>1</sup> This is the only plausible way of explaining the second call of the Moabites to Balaam (De Geer, *Bil.* p. 6).



in accordance with his desire.<sup>1</sup> Hence might have arisen the supposition that Balaam had refused to go with the Moabites, because the messengers were not sufficiently important, nor their presents as costly as the circumstances required.<sup>2</sup> Balak was alarmed at the (imaginary) danger; it seemed to him that the hour of his people's doom was near, and therefore he decided to use every means in his power to obtain the aid of Balaam's power. First, he had sent presents with the idea of exciting his love of gain, then he resolved to appeal to his ambition. Therefore, in spite of Balaam's refusal, he immediately despatched a second embassy, consisting of more princes, more honourable than the first, with suitable presents, and with the following flattering proposal: '*Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: for I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people*' (vers. 16, 17). The messengers speedily equipped themselves for the journey, passed safely through the scattered groups of the tribes of Reuben and Manasseh, who had recently settled in these parts, and reached Pethor, where the famous magian dwelt, in about ten days. It is probable that Balaam received them with no small astonishment and some displeasure. Some presentiment of evil must have entered his heart; in fact, a fatal trial lay

<sup>1</sup> The Moabites lived near the Egyptians, and were undoubtedly under the influence of their culture. And, according to popular belief in Egypt, the beneficent magian was able not only to implore the Divinity to give him power over the spirits, but also to command the Divinity itself. The belief that the formulas of exorcisms contain in themselves a power, which could command even the most powerful gods, was founded on the supposition current in those countries that the use of certain magic formulas raises a man as high as the gods, and may unite him with any of them. For this reason the Alexandrian authors tell us that the Egyptians imagined that their exorcisms and magic conjurations could force the gods to reveal themselves to them and fulfil their desires; for no god called by his actual name had the strength to resist the power of these exorcisms and conjurations (Lenormant, *Magic*, pp. 101, 102).

<sup>2</sup> This was the usual point of view in antiquity (cf. Virgil, *Æneid*, ii. verses 361 *et seq.*, and 2 Kings viii. 8, 9).

before him. Until then he had evidently never met with any hindrance from the part of the Divinity, and had never failed in the fulfilment of his magic proceedings, nor in foreseeing the events interesting to his clients; there was something different about the present case. From the point of view of justice and compassion, he considered it judicious to save the Moabites from the danger which menaced them; nevertheless, the Lord, ignoring the Moabites, forbids him to curse the obnoxious and dangerous Israelites, and even defended them, declaring them blessed, that is, destined to enjoy perfect and long-continued happiness. The first time Balaam came easily out of the trial. The Lord forbid his intervention, he did not oppose His will, and refused to fulfil the Moabites' appeal (vers. 7-13). But now they had returned a second time from their distant country; they had come in greater number, with costly gifts and the king's deferential request and flattering promises. Could the matter be lightly treated? Would these men have undertaken for the second time without sore need a long and difficult journey, full of dangers and inconveniences? Was not this alone reason sufficient to pity them? And he himself and his fame? Was it not the fame of his wonderful power which had inspired the Moabites with such strong faith both in the destructive and saving force of his magic will? Would not refusal in this case be cruelty and a proof of his magic impotence? Who could guarantee that the Moabites and other nations would not explain his refusal as an acknowledgment of weakness which would throw a shade upon his glory and lower him to the level of ordinary magicians and conjurers? And the costly presents? Would it be honourable to take them without giving anything in return? And how could these troubled Moabite messengers be received otherwise than with solicitude? Balaam hardly owned to himself his passion for gold; but the offerings which were frequently made to him had unconsciously to himself fostered the love of lucre in his soul, till it greatly influenced

the direction of his thoughts and actions. And therefore now, under the impulse of such considerations, Balaam ardently desired to fulfil the Moabites' request. But could he go against the will of God? Could not the Lord paralyse all his actions? Was it not in the Lord's power to deliver the accursed from the snare of the fowler, from the noisome pestilence, from the terror by night, from the arrow that flieth by day, from the destruction that wasteth at noonday, from the attack of ten thousand enemies, from the bite of the lion and the sting of the adder? (Ps. xci.)

Balaam, being aware of all this, and clearly bearing in mind the former stern prohibition of the Lord about going with the Moabite messengers and cursing Israel, felt the necessity of refusing a second time, although not without bitterness at the thought of this incomprehensible favour of the Lord towards the people who had come out of the 'hateful' land of Egypt: *'And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more'* according to His will (ver. 18).

In these words sounds the voice of the prophet, who raises the moral law of God above his own egotistical arguments and the impulses of his sinful nature. Balaam here declares himself a worshipper of Jehovah,<sup>1</sup> and confesses the depend-

<sup>1</sup> When Balaam calls Jehovah his God, he avows himself a worshipper of Jehovah (Hos. ii. 23, viii. 2, ix. 8; Zech. xiii. 9; Ps. vii. 3, 4, xviii. 6, 29).

The text of the above-cited verses (8-18) is comprehensible both in the Slavonic and Russian translations of the Bible, and the sense is identical in both versions. Some words and expressions of the Russian translation are placed in parentheses, because these words are missing in the Hebrew Massoreth text, from which the Russian edition is translated, and the editors wished the Russian text to correspond as closely as possible with the authorised Church Slavonic text (translated from the Septuagint), in which are included the words placed in parentheses in the Russian version. There is a difference between the Slavonic and Russian interpretations of the 13th verse in the words ВОЗВРАТИТЕСЯ КЪ ГОСПОДЬНУ СВОЕМУ (Slav. 'return to your master') and ПОЙДИТЕ ВЪ ЗЕМЛЮ ВАШУ (Russ. 'get you into your land'),

ence of his actions on the will of the true God ; but experience shows us that moral convictions do not always prevail over sinful impulses even in the life of the best members of the Church, its history being full of examples of persons who fell deeply into sin notwithstanding the elevation of their moral disposition. The Lord Himself recognises the possibility of such trials by exhorting His followers to pray to their heavenly Father not to be led into temptation (Luke xi. 4). It is therefore neither strange nor revolting if Balaam, who lived in the midst of a corrupt pagan society, was not free from the cupidity and ambition which characterised the heathen priests and soothsayers. On the other hand, the fact of the second message from the distant land of Moab and the insistent appeals of Balak's messengers must have gained Balaam's heart in favour of the Moabites, and turned him still more against the people who had come out from the hated land of Egypt. The latter circumstance, that is, the hatred of Balaam against the Egyptians, may have had great significance. The prophet Jonah would not listen to the Lord's command to preach in the town of Nineveh, which was detested by the Israelites, as Palestine had been more than once devastated by the Babylonian kings, and the Lord found it good to subject the prophet to a terrible warning by casting him into the belly of a whale. It was only after this warning that the prophet decided to fulfil the direct command of the Lord, and went to preach in the hated city (Jonah i.-ii.). If, therefore, a prophet of Israel who had grown up in obedience to the Lord acted thus, it was still more possible to expect opposition to the will of the Lord in a similar case on the part of Balaam. He could hardly have clearly realised the full measure of God's love for the people

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but this is of no essential importance, and requires no explanation. The expression *ἐν τῇ διαβολῇ μου*, in my mind (ver. 18), must be considered as an explanatory complement, for there is no corresponding expression in the Hebrew text which has reached us.

of Israel. What reason had he to think that an Israelite, son of Abraham, was better than all the nations of the world in the eyes of the Lord? In what could he see the guarantee that God would not alter His favour to the Israelites through the prayers of the Moabites trembling before their foes? In such a position it might have seemed to Balaam just to stand in defence of the Moabites and appeal once more to God. He certainly did not think that he was 'kicking against the pricks' (Acts ix. 5); and, shielding his cupidity and ambition under the cover of other more plausible considerations, he said to Balak's messengers, '*Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more*' (ver. 19).<sup>1</sup> Thus the members of Balak's second embassy remained the night at Balaam's to wait for the decision which he hoped to receive from God. Trust in the Lord's favour, and the clear feeling of His nearness probably made Balaam think it possible to implore God to alter His former decree. There may have already been occasions in the course of Balaam's life when God had been moved to compassion, and had changed His decrees, as we find mentioned in Num. xvi. 21-33 (cf. Exod. xxxii. 14; Jonah iii. 10). However this may have been, Balaam's hopes were justified, for God had predetermined to turn into good the unrighteous intentions of the Mesopotamian magian. Therefore '*God came at night*,' and perhaps by means of '*some secret word*' (Job iv. 12; cf. 1 Sam. iii. 4) said, '*If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them*;<sup>2</sup> but yet the word which I shall

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew פָּתַח in the Greco-Slavonic καὶ εὖν η ΝΕΨΗΚ is translated in accordance with the Syrian, Samaritan, and Onkelos texts. The word פָּתַח is more exactly interpreted by the Russian word впрочемъ, (besides). This word is interpreted in the same manner by Rosenmüller in *Scholia in Pentateuchum ad hunc locum*.

<sup>2</sup> The command קוּם, קוּם, 'rise up, go,' does not mean here an order, but a permission, as expressed in 2 Sam. xviii. 23; 2 Kings xi. 17; Gen. xvi. 6 (Knobel, *Kurzgefasstes Handb.* xxii.). 'As Balaam, allured by the promised

say unto thee, that shalt thou do' (ver. 20). In this case the Lord allowed man's freewill to manifest itself, and permitted Balaam to follow his impulses as long as they were harmless; but He Himself directed the course of these actions and events in accordance with His pre-eternal plans, turning into good the evil that had arisen through deviation from good, so that the curse meditated by Balaam should be converted into an eternal blessing to the true descendants of Israel.

§ 4. Overjoyed by this favour, Balaam rose in the morning,<sup>1</sup> communicated the joyful intelligence to the princes of Balak, and ordered that his ass should be saddled without delay, this animal being the fittest for such a long journey<sup>2</sup>; and taking two servants with him (ver. 22), departed with the princes of Moab at increased speed, probably taking the same road by which the Aramite Laban had pursued his son-in-law Jacob (Gen. xxxi.). The journey could not have lasted less than ten days even with rapid and uninterrupted movement. There was ample time for meditation and for considering the questions that lay nearest to the heart. In such a position and in such circumstances, what could have been the thoughts of the Moabite princes and their illustrious fellow traveller?

The elders of Moab had left their country about ten or fifteen days before, threatened, as it seemed to them, by an enemy who was preparing to destroy their countrymen. Might not the thought daily recur to them that they would return to find their homes empty and devastated, and be left themselves beggars with only what they carried with them? Was not

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money, appealed to the Lord a second time, thinking that He might alter His will, and questioned Him whether he ought to go with the messengers; so God permitted him to go, but the permission was given as if to mean, Go, because you want to, but know that you will say that which I desire' (Blessed Theodorus, *Commentary on the Book of Numbers*, quest. 40, i. 219). 'God punished Balaam's greed by permitting him to act according to his impious inclinations' (St. Augustine, *Comment. in Numb.*).

<sup>1</sup> De Geer, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Bochartus, *Hierozoikon*, part i. book ii. ch. 14, p. 195; see also note 49, and Archimandrite Jerome, *Biblical Archaeology*, i. 62, 63.

this painful uncertainty as to the state of affairs on the shores of the Dead Sea an incentive to make them hasten and spur on their illustrious fellow traveller? Even supposing that all would be well, that the 'strangers from Egypt' had not yet attacked their land, and that the soothsayer would do what he came to do, still what would the results be? Could they be delivered from the terrible neighbours that had come to them? Thought after thought of a like sort filled the souls of Balak's messengers and drove them forward to the rescue of their people. Balaam also hastened on, perhaps even more engrossed in thought than they as to the results of his journey, as to how the will of God would be manifested, whether it would be favourable to the Moabites. What should he do if the commands of God were against the Moabites, and in that case how would Balak behave to him afterwards? What was the meaning of the divine words, '*The word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do*'? The situation was involved, the future appeared obscure. He could not understand why the Just Almighty should stand in defence of the oppressor. In what respect was the people come out from Egypt better than others? In what nearer to God? Are not all nations created by Him; are they not all the work of His hands? Why did He allow this people to 'devour' other nations? Had not the Egyptians already worked sufficient harm to the nations of anterior Asia?<sup>1</sup> And there might naturally rise in Balaam's heart a feeling of displeasure against God, which was heightened by the fears and lamentations of the elders of Moab, because of the destruction with which they were apparently threatened. Balaam could not listen unmoved to these lamentations, especially as his heart was already gained in favour of the Moabites, both by their gifts and by their invincible faith in his wonderful magic power. This circumstance perhaps, above all, roused Balaam's

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<sup>1</sup> Brugsch, *Egypt*, pp. 334-340, 351, 441, 442, 446, 447.

compassion for the Moabites and his hatred for their imaginary foes. All this naturally inspired Balaam with a passionate desire for the destruction of the Israelites, and he fell into transports of agonised prayer to Jehovah to allow him by his curses to 'pierce' the souls of the Israelites, to deprive them of their courage and tranquillity, to paralyse their movements, and thus deliver them into the hands of the Moabites. Other thoughts and imaginations may have risen in his mind. He had been called from afar; the messengers had been twice to call him; they believed in him as a saviour; what if nothing came out of his journey! What a loss to the riches which he was accumulating, what a blow to his self-love, what a grievous shame thrown on the widespread fame of the mighty soothsayer! Until that day he had been considered the most renowned, the wisest and mightiest amongst his colleagues, and here is the possibility, in case of failure, of his being degraded in popular estimation to the ranks of ordinary magians! Would not this be a heavy blow? Plunged in such meditations, Balaam could hardly have noticed, or cared to notice, any of the objects he met with during his long journey. Amidst the accesses of fear and despair which assailed him, and the tormenting impossibility of apprehending the meaning of the enigmatic and terrible words, '*Which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do*' (ver. 20), the only ray of light which glimmered through his darkness was the faint hope that God, who had permitted the journey, which He had at first forbidden, might at last allow him to curse the people 'come from out Egypt.' He went over and over in his mind all possible arguments in favour of the Moabites and in condemnation of the Israelites. The excitement of his agonised prayers, the fear of their not being fulfilled, and again the hope of saving the Moabites,—all these sensations passed in turn through his soul, and painfully agitated his sensitive nervous nature. He bore in himself the conviction that all depended on the will of the Almighty; all his mental faculties were strained to see through the



curtain of visible objects and phenomena which conceal from our material senses God Himself, the world of spirits, and the hidden forces of nature. He realised the existence of the celestial world of spirits; the commands of the Lord sounded loudly and mightily in his ears; and yet he thought '*not of that which is of God, but of that which is of man.*' He wanted to incline God to fulfil his intentions, therefore he persistently prayed to be allowed to curse the hated people 'come out from Egypt,' and chafed at the thought that his hopes might prove vain.<sup>1</sup>

§ 5. In such painful thoughts, hopes, and doubts passed several days and nights. The caravan with the Moabite messengers was already drawing near to the borders of the land of Moab. The elders had probably informed Balaam of the proximity to the boundaries where the camps of the terrible strangers were pitched, and therefore precautions had to be taken in order not to come into contact or fall into the hands of the Israelitish families who were scattered in groups about those parts. The agitation of Balaam's soul increased as the hour approached for the fulfilment of the work with which he was intrusted, and he grew conscious of the nearness of the terrible 'people come out from Egypt.' The hopes of success, the fear of failure, the permission or prohibition from '*the invisible lips*' of the Almighty,—all this raised a tempest of different sensations in his soul, thrilled his frame, and must have made him feverishly shiver throughout all his organism in proportion as he drew nearer to the land of Moab. Yet, like a stubborn ox, he would

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<sup>1</sup> This picture of Balaam's mental condition may appear fantastic and arbitrary to some of our readers. We do not insist upon the absolute reality of these assertions. We only give a *probable explanation* of the terrible apparition of the angel of the Lord on the way with a fresh warning, although the command already given (ver. 20) was amply sufficient for Balaam. In reality, would Balaam have appealed a second time to God if he had solely followed the wishes of his covetous soul? Suppositions thus founded on conclusions drawn by means of analogy are constantly to be met with in the Commentaries of St. John Chrysostom on the Book of Genesis, with the object of a more ample explanation of the short Bible narratives.

not cease to struggle in his soul against the Lord's words, 'Yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do' (ver. 20); and already, in sight of the hills of Moab, he probably resolved in his mind, come what might, to pronounce the curse against Israel: 'And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him.'<sup>1</sup> Now he was riding upon his ass, and

<sup>1</sup> The text of the verses 19-22 is intelligible by itself, only the expression ΠΡΕΠΑΤΗ ΕΜΕ ΝΑ ΠΣΤΗ (ver. 22) (Slav.) requires explanation. This expression is a free translation of the authorised Vatican edition of the text of the Septuagint, possibly made under the influence of the Latin Vulgate. In the Vatican Codex edited by Tischendorf, the words ἐπὶ τῆς ὁδοῦ (on the way) are missing, and instead of ἐνδιαβαλεῖν, adopted in the Cambridge edition of the Vatican text and in the Aldine and Complutensian editions, we read simply διαβαλεῖν. It is undoubted that the words ἐπὶ τῆς ὁδοῦ are authentic, for they are to be found in the best codices of the Septuagint, and are undoubtedly the translation of the original Hebrew word בַּדְּרֹךְ. The expressions ἐνδιαβάλλειν or ἐνδιαβαλεῖν, or simply διαβαλεῖν, may be considered dubious. In a parallel passage, ver. 32 of the same chapter, we read εἰς διαβολὴν standing in direct correspondence as to form with the Hebrew בְּשָׁטָן; and as in the above cited verse the word ΠΡΕΠΑΤΗ also means in Hebrew בְּשָׁטָן, it is very probable that in the primitive manuscripts of the Septuagint εἰς διαβολὴν was read. This is the more probable, as with the compact writing of the ancient Greek it is very easy to take εἰς διαβολὴν for ἐνδιαβαλεῖν or ἐνδιαβάλλειν. Finally, even in the Greek κοινῇ διαλέκτῳ, ἐνδιαβάλλω was not used in this sense, but the word διαβολή was employed. The radical signification of this word is calumny; but the Septuagint, influenced by the demonological considerations of their time, found it appropriate to use the Hebrew word בְּשָׁטָן for impediment, obstacle, instead of ἀντικείσθαι or ἐναντιοῦσθαι, and to transmit the Hebrew expression metonymically in the sense of trap, ambushade, impediment. Besides this, the commentators of the Bible, particularly the more modern ones, were led into great perplexity by the contents of the verse, 'And God's anger was kindled because he went; and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him,' confronted with the words of the Lord in the 20th verse 'Rise up, and go with them' (the messengers of the king of Moab). The following considerations were suggested to clear up the difficulty. It was supposed by some that the cited words of the 20th verse signified in this case: 'I permit you to go with the messengers if they do not require from you anything contrary to My commandments. And Balaam understood these words as if God had given him the right of going with the Moabites on condition that in future he would never do anything against the commandments of God' (Rosenmüller, *Scholia in Pentateuchum ad Num. xxii. 22*). It is

his two servants were with him' (ver. 22).<sup>1</sup> This was the legitimate consequence of God's will in reference to Balaam's conduct, his frame of mind, and aspirations. Balaam was neither higher nor holier than the prophets Moses, Aaron, Jonah, and others. If the two former incurred the wrath of God, and had not entered the promised land because they had yielded to doubt and had not exactly fulfilled God's will as to the means of bringing forth water out of the rock (Num. xx. 8-10, 24; Exod. iv. 14; Deut. i. 37); if the prophet Jonah (Jon. i. 4, 12, 15) must be cast into the belly of the whale

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evident that this is an artificial interpretation. De Geer in *Bil.* p. 39 is inclined to think that the Hebrew כִּי means in the present case *time*, and that the whole phrase בִּיהוֹלָךְ הוּא means 'when (*dum*) he was on the way.'

However, such an interpretation of כִּי is not here appropriate. According to our opinion, this is a difficulty which has been exaggerated by the carnal subtleties of the biblicists of the rationalistic school (see Hengstenb. *Bil.* p. 44, note, and Bauer, *Geschichte der alten Weissag.*, pp. 333, 334, note 12), and can be cleared up by admitting (as has already been said above) that the 20th verse only contains a permission which does not exclude the just and chastising relation of God to unrighteous intentions. All the history of the salvation or of the education of mankind in God consists on one hand in the permission given to man to use his liberty as he likes, and on the other in the simultaneously chastising and instructing relation of God to reasonable beings (Rom. i. 18, 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness'). According to the generally accepted interpretation (see *Criticorum Sacrorum sive Annotat. ad Pentateuch. Numbers xxii.*) handed down from the rabbi, the Lord was angry with Balaam because he went to the land of Moab with the firm intention of causing harm to the Israelites. This could not do otherwise than call forth the Lord's corresponding warning actions. It is directly said in the 32nd verse that the angel of the Lord went out to withstand him because his way was perverse. In the Holy Scriptures the word 'way' in its metaphorical sense expresses every intention, enterprise, design (see Bishop Theophanus' *Explanation of Ps. cxix.* 5). A full exposition of the instructing motive of God's action in the passage cited may be found in Keil's *Comment. über die Bücher Mos.*

<sup>1</sup> God terrifies Balaam both by the unnatural speech of the ass and the apparition of the angel in order that he should learn God's care for His chosen people. Some say that the angel was Michael, the intercessor of the people of Israel (Blessed Theodoritus, *Book of Numbers*, quest. 41, i. p. 219). According to the unanimous affirmation of the commentators, this event took place at a short distance from the northern boundaries of the land of Moab (see De Geer, *Bil.* p. 41, and the above-mentioned work of Keil).

for his hatred against the Ninevites and his unwillingness to preach to them; then, in the present case, there was still less reason to leave unwarned an action like Balaam's, which was doubly culpable, as the man who wished to commit it was specially endowed by Providence, and possessed considerable influence amongst the heathen tribes; besides which, this action concerned the fate of God's chosen people at the time of their training by means of God's mercies and benefits. It was therefore necessary to put a restraint on Balaam and place him under judgment. The judgments of God are always accomplished in a double form—either in a preventive and saving form, or as punishment by death. The manifestations of God to the patriarchs, to David, Solomon, and the prophet Jonah may serve as examples of the first form; the drowning of the Egyptians, the burning of the Sodomites, the death of Saul on Mount Gilboa, and others, may be considered as examples of the second. What judgment might be expected in the present case? We may conclude from the 20th verse alone, without consulting the following, that in permitting Balaam to go to the land of Moab under certain conditions the Lord had resolved to give a warning and a lesson to the magian. As the terrible judgments of God are sudden and unexpected, so, on the contrary, are His saving manifestations always accompanied by some preliminary circumstances, which serve as instruments for teaching the person to be corrected, for the concentration of his thoughts into the depths of his conscience, and the direction of his mental gaze towards the hidden forces of the spiritual world. And the less capable is he who is destined to be the recipient of God's will of discerning it in the form of spiritual manifestations, the more he is engrossed by material things, the more complicated is his preparation, and the more striking are the preventive signs of the divine will. The more a man goes against the will of God, the more terrible are the preventive measures. The Word of God, '*this two-edged sword*'

(Heb. iv. 12), either erects or destroys. The prophet Jonah did not obey the voice of God, and thought to flee from God to Tarshish; but the Lord raised a mighty tempest on the sea, led him to acknowledge the sin he had committed and God's sovereign Omnipresence, and cast him into the belly of the whale. It was only then that the prophet fully recognised that the Lord is Almighty. And if it was thus with Jonah, it could not be otherwise with Balaam. Therefore the Lord, Who had declared His name throughout all the earth by smiting the stubbornness of Pharaoh (Exod. ix. 16; Rom. ix. 17, 18), deigned to declare Himself by shaming Balaam's cupidity by means of special subduing and instructive signs of His sovereign Omnipresence.

But how was this to be attained? Divine wisdom has always chosen for the salutary instruction of mankind objects generally well known, and such as may serve as indubitable signs of the divine wishes. The Lord Jehovah revealed Himself to Moses in the deserts of Sinai in a thorn bush enveloped in a marvellous flame, in the midst of a rocky desert, in order to show him, as he grieved at the oppression of his brethren in Egypt, that the position of his people was similar to that of an unconsumed bush enveloped in flames. In order to testify to Pharaoh the divine mission of Moses and His own boundless power, the Lord commanded Moses to turn, before Pharaoh, his rod into a serpent, which the Egyptians regarded as the emblem of royal power.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, in the present case also the Lord condescended to employ as instruments of instruction objects accessible to Balaam's comprehension. Balaam was a soothsayer and a diviner. As a soothsayer he firmly believed in the existence and influence on the human fate of a numerous world of good and evil spirits. As a diviner he searched on necessary occasions for indications of the Divinity in the extraordinary phenomena of nature, and

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<sup>1</sup> Savvaitzky, M. T., *The Departure of the Israelites from Egypt*, pp. 56-61.

amongst others in unusual actions of animals, in the peculiar sounds they uttered, in the movements of their bodies, etc.<sup>1</sup> Conformably to this the Lord chose for Balaam's admonition the extraordinary action of his beast of burden—his ass, and the apparition of an angel. The unusual disobedience and frightened movements of a submissive animal like the ass struck Balaam and showed him the necessity of obeying a higher power. And then as the caravan of the Moabite messengers with Balaam and his servants drew near to the land of Moab, and some obstacle on the road made the travellers ride at a certain distance from each other, Balaam from an unknown cause was separated from the caravan and fell into the rear.<sup>2</sup> His distinguished travelling companions naturally took no notice of his absence, knowing that he would soon catch them up. However, Balaam's falling back was occasioned by a special reason. 'The nearer Balaam approached the object of his journey, the more he felt attracted by the perspective of the honours and riches which awaited him if he succeeded in satisfying the king's requirements; little by little, his passion might so darken his heart that he saw nothing of what passed before his eyes. The ambition and cupidity which had previously overcome him had on the journey increased to such an extent that they threatened to stifle the last remnants of his fear of God. If he had been left to himself, it is probable that he would have cursed Israel in order to please Balak.'<sup>3</sup> Balaam was already indifferent to the surrounding landscape, he noticed neither fields nor mountains on the way, not even the caravan which accompanied him, when suddenly there arose before the eyes of his ass a vision in the form of a human being standing in the way with a drawn sword in his hand. This being appeared

<sup>1</sup> This is described in detail in chap. iii. 'Balaam.'

<sup>2</sup> The episode with the ass took place, evidently, when he was alone, because neither the servants nor the princes are mentioned in verse 22.

<sup>3</sup> Hengstenberg, *Bil.* pp. 45, 46.

extraordinary to the ass; she clearly perceived its crushing force and deadly intentions. The instinct of self-preservation made the ass uncontrollably and persistently draw aside from the vision which barred the road: *'And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field'* (ver. 23). But this movement of the ass was so undesirable in view of the speedy fulfilment of Balak's ardent appeal, that Balaam, tired besides by his long journey, began to mercilessly smite the ass with his staff, which in the East was the usual attribute of a traveller and of a distinguished person. The blows of the staff took their effect, the ass followed the direction given her by her master, and turned into the path between the walls of the vineyards;<sup>1</sup> but hardly had she made a few steps, when the terrible vision with the drawn sword again appeared, and *'the angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side'* (ver. 24; cf. Isa. v. 5; Prov. xxiv. 31; Job xxiv. 11). In order to avoid the strokes of the infuriated rider, the ass was this time ready to go past the terrible vision, but the narrowness of the space made her go so close to the wall that she crushed Balaam's foot against it (ver. 25). This apparent causeless deviation from the path and the crushing of his foot put Balaam into a state of fury, and he showered blows upon the poor animal. At this moment the angel of the Lord became invisible, and the

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<sup>1</sup> The Greco-Slavonic text *ἐν ταῖς ἀδλαξὶ τῶν ἀμπελων*, *НА ПРОЗАДѢХЪ БІНОГРѢДНУХЪ* is picturesque, but not quite correct. The sense of the Greek word *ἀδλαξ*, 'furrow,' is somewhat narrower than the Hebrew *לִּנְשֵׁבִית*. The latter word, which is not to be met anywhere, signifies, according to the opinion of De Geer, 'intermediate space' (*Dissert. de Bîl.* pp. 42, 43). Therefore, the Hebrew *לִּנְשֵׁבִית* expresses more exactly the narrow space between the vineyards, which is generally met with between the low stone walls which surround the vineyards (see St. Augustine, quest. 50 in Numbers).

unfortunate animal found it possible to fulfil its master's will, and turned to the middle of the path. This second deviation of the ass doubtless puzzled Balaam. As a seer and diviner, he could not but ponder over the extraordinary conduct of the ass; but this thought was instantly stifled by the crushing anxiety that filled his soul as to the success of his journey. Therefore, *'the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left'* (ver. 26). And when the ass, guided by her irritated rider, approached this place and saw the terrible vision straight before her eyes, she could do nothing but draw back against the will of her angry master, or lie down, in order to show that every farther movement was impossible for her. *'And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam'* (ver. 27).

This was the last spark which set ablaze all the passionate feelings which tossed Balaam's heart. The fear of not arriving in time, of remaining in arrear of the caravan, of being lost in an unknown country, of falling perhaps into the hands of 'the hateful strangers come out from Egypt,' or other nomad tribes,—all this combined to raise Balaam's fiery nature to the highest degree of irritation at the extraordinary behaviour of the ass: *'And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff'* (ver. 27). But in the midst of his furious anger there came again fresh thoughts proceeding from special inward enlightenment; and it flashed upon him that the extraordinary behaviour of the ass must signify something unusual, and that these were signs of God's wrath at his intention of cursing the people blessed by God, and an omen of the failure which awaited him. Such thoughts were the natural outcome of the Chaldean custom of reading the future by the movements of the animals, and at that moment must have appeared particularly significant to Balaam, as though giving him a glimpse into the regions of the invisible world. He forgot everything; all his plans and hopes and the desired



solemn reception of Balak vanished from his memory. The narrow passage and the prostrate ass were illuminated for him with a peculiar heavenly light: '*And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?*' (ver. 28.) This wonderful speech of the ass reminds us of the words of the serpent to Eve in Paradise (Gen. iii. 1-5). Satan then chose the serpent's mouth as the exterior organ and instrument for the expression of his destructive thoughts, and the most suitable for his fatal conversation with Eve. In the present case the Lord found it more salutary to bring Balaam to the consciousness of the unrighteousness of the path he had chosen, by corresponding words put into the mouth of the ass, by means of the wonderful conversation of a dumb animal as an unusual and perceptible phenomenon. The ass expressed in human speech what she dimly felt at the given moment—a complaint of undeserved cruelty on the part of her master. Balaam was, however, neither awestruck nor astonished. His naturally prophetic soul had an instinctive comprehension of the mysterious; and he believed in the possibility of miracles; he had more than once heard the words of God, and had seen visions of the Almighty (Num. xxiv. 4, 16); he could recognise the extraordinary proceedings of the ass from the Chaldean point of view as signs of the will of the Most High. Therefore Balaam answered the complaint of his ass, expressed in so unusual a form, with the same unconcern with which he would have spoken to his slave: '*And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee*' (ver. 29).<sup>1</sup> And again he felt an

<sup>1</sup> According to the *Commentary* of St. Augustine (question 50 on the Book of Numbers), Balaam was in such a state of excitement that he did not even feel frightened at this miraculous phenomenon, and answered the ass as if it were the speech of a human being with whom he conversed. God, however, had never turned the ass into a reasonable being, but had only permitted the ass to utter human sounds to restrain Balaam from his insane intention.

extraordinary thrill in his heart, and the luminous thought struck him once more that all this would not have taken place without higher reasons. Meanwhile the speech by which the ass justified herself in answer to the irritated words of the magian was such as to finally and completely plunge Balaam into a state of ecstasy and semi-oblivion; she said: *'Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay,'* (ver. 30).<sup>1</sup> These words were rays which completely enlightened Balaam as to the true meaning of what had happened. He at once saw that a higher power was acting in the ass; and in the agitation of his heart, he fell into that state of rapture when a man becomes insensible to all around him, is entirely absorbed in one idea, and enters into the sphere of the perception of that innermost feeling which lies hidden in the depths of his soul. Balaam had fallen into the state when a man entirely ceases to remark the influences transmitted by his outward senses, looses himself from his earthly shroud, and turns to the innermost part of his being—to his will, which stands in immediate contact with the world of bodiless spiritual forces: *'Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel*

<sup>1</sup> In the 30th verse there is a slight difference between the Greco-Slavonian and the Russian texts, between the words *Ů юности* and *сначала* and in the expressions *презбрѣвомъ презрѣвши* and *имѣла привычку*. The Hebrew *מֵעַתָּה* means, in general, 'from your existence,' or since the time when you live (Onkelos). But as a man does not generally begin to ride immediately after his birth, but much later, usually in the second decennium of his life, the Septuagint have found it correct to translate it not literally, but nearer to the actual reality *Ů юности* (from your youth). The difference in the second part of the 30th verse proceeded very probably from a confusion made by the Septuagint on account of the likeness between the letters of two Hebrew words, *בָּקַעַ*, which means to have the habit, to remain long in the same position, and *בָּקַעַ*, to despise. But the Massoreth text seems the most correct and most appropriate, therefore the Russian translation of the Bible (from the Massoreth text) is quite correct.

of the Lord<sup>1</sup> standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand' (ver. 31).

At the sight of this apparition, Balaam fell into the highest state of ecstasy; like Abraham, Ezekiel, Daniel, and others, he involuntarily '*bowed down his head and fell flat on his face*' (ver. 31). At that moment he was quite ready to receive the revelation, and his heart was sufficiently softened to submit to the will of God. The stubbornness of the Mesopotamian soothsayer was at last subdued, and he gave up his preconceived plans in a tumult of mingled feelings of vexation and grief, fear and hope, anger and impotence, before a Higher Power. The feeling of enmity for the people of Israel died away. The desire to smite them by a curse, the dreams of the rewards and honours that awaited him, all faded from his heart. Balaam fell into a state of expectation of an approaching terror, and lost every desire to conclude the mission he had undertaken: '*And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee,*<sup>2</sup> *because thy way*' (the tendency of thy

<sup>1</sup> Who is here understood under the name of the angel of the Lord? According to the opinion of Origen (*Homilia in Num.*), this angel was the protector of the people of Israel, that is, the archangel Michael, who apparently throughout the Scriptures stands forth as the defender of the people of Israel (Blessed Theodorus, question 41 on the Book of Numbers xxii.). The Hebrew commentators see in him the archangel Gabriel. But the opinion of the Blessed Theodorus corresponds more nearly to the actuality.

<sup>2</sup> The word ΠΡΕΠΑΤΙΕ (withstanding), as has been already explained, is a metaphorical translation of the Greek word διαβολή. It may be admitted that the Septuagint read instead of לִשְׂטָן, 'to withstand' (in the metonymical sense 'to slander,' 'to accuse') the word לִשְׂטָן, 'to accuse,' to show the unlawfulness of an action. Such an interpretation of the word διαβολή founded on לִשְׂטָן in one of the Samaritan codices of the Pentateuch (see Kennicott, *Bibl. Hebr.*) seems more in accordance with the context than the interpretation 'to withstand.' According to the indication given in the 35th verse, the angel does not withstand Balaam on the way, but only reminds him of God's command (ver. 20) to act as God would inspire him. Therefore the angel appeared not to stop Balaam on his way to Balak, but to express to Balaam a terrible and warning reproof of his secret aspiration to act according to his human point of view.

spirit) 'is perverse before me' (ver. 32).<sup>1</sup> 'And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive' (ver. 33).<sup>2</sup>

Mightily, as the blow of a hammer, fell the words of the angel on the soul of the Mesopotamian magian, humbling him to the dust. He fully realised how misplaced had been his obstinate defence of the Moabities, 'And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me.' Thus Balaam avowed himself half guilty. He forgot that he had undertaken the journey in consequence of a permission, which he had obtained by his entreaties from the Lord; it seemed to him that he would not have acted thus if he had known that it was displeasing to the Lord. Balaam only acknowledged his fault in guiding the ass against the angel of the Lord;

<sup>1</sup> יָאֵקוֹ נִפְרִיָאֲתֵנָז, כִּי־יֵרָם, is interpreted differently in different codices. According to Onkelos, 'I know that you are going against me'; in Arabic (thy way before me) is shut (by the angel it is understood), according to the Samaritan text and the Septuagint: 'thy way is perverse to me.' According to the latest investigations, יֵרָם means to lead to destruction. Schultens has proved by many passages that, properly speaking, this word means a path which it is impossible to quit, and which leads to destruction (Job xvi. 14). 'I,' says the angel, 'went out to withstand thee, because thy way before my commandment is full of mortal danger for thee.' This interpretation is accepted by De Geer (*Dissert. de Bil.* pp. 44, 45) and Keil. (*Comment. zu d. St.*) and Rosenmüller (*Schol. in Pentateuch.*).

<sup>2</sup> The corresponding Greco-Slavonic *et μή ἂν ἦε εἴ, εἴη ὅλ* (unless), Hebrew אֵל, is usually used in the sense of 'may be.' In the present case this interpretation does not seem quite appropriate, and a more suitable signification has long been sought for. The interpretation proposed by De Geer of the word אֵל in the sense, '*certis persuasionibus meis*,' literally, 'by my undoubted conviction' (*Dissert. de Bil.* p. 46), is difficult to agree with, and seems quite out of place. Some interpreters, like Hengstenberg, think that in the present case אֵל represents a peculiar turn of the phrase ἀποσιώησις, 'passing over in silence.' Therefore the ass 'may be' turned either out of attachment for her master, or through a dim instinct of impending danger. The angel of God does not directly explain what he means, but leaves it to the prophet to explain the fact himself, only giving him a suggestion of other motives than those supposed by Balaam in order to arouse in him a greater feeling of shame for his unfounded cruelty: 'Perhaps

therefore he said to the angel with a painful sense of shattered hopes, '*Now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again*' (ver. 34). But this was not in accordance with God's will. Having predetermined that Balaam should go to the Moabites under certain conditions, and having in view the welfare of the sons of Israel, the Lord foreordained that this should be exactly fulfilled. God is not a man that He should change (cf. xxiii. 19), '*for with God nothing shall be impossible*' (Luke i. 37). Therefore '*the angel of the Lord said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak*' (ver. 35). With this the vision ended, the angel of the Lord became invisible, and Balaam found himself alone with his ass in the narrow path between the walls of the vineyards.<sup>1</sup> Disturbed by this event, the sooth-sayer's first thought was doubtless a desire to immediately join

she turned from me . . . for otherwise I should have slain thee and saved her alive.' The most probable explanation and conclusion of the unspoken thought in Balaam's soul must have been: 'Out of love for me, her ungrateful master.' By this interpretation, however, Hengstenberg entirely weakens the most important signification of the context, for before stand the distinct words 'the ass saw me and turned,' so that the 'may be' loses its sense. Moreover, the argument, which is advanced as a refutation of the generally accepted reading, namely, that כִּי can never be translated by the conjunction TO (then), can be easily put aside, for it is well known that כִּי is used six hundred times as an antithesis, when the prothesis is expressed by אֲדָא or לִי.

It is therefore evident that the expression לִי כִּי-עָתָה is used in the same manner in the Book of Genesis (xxxi. 42, xliii. 10) (see Oort, *Disput. de Per. Num.* xxii.-xxiv. p. 10). That the Septuagint had in this place not אֲדָא, but לִי, is fully confirmed by the fact that in Gen. xxxi. 42 and xliii. 10, כִּי-עָתָה לִי, are transmitted in the same manner as in the thirty-third verse of the twenty-second chapter of the Book of Numbers by the expressions: 'el μη . . . νεν . . . δν, ЕСЛИ БЫ НЕ . . . . . ТО ВОТЪ (ИЛИ УЖЕ) with the same moods of the aorist.

<sup>1</sup> The events just recorded have appeared strange and even scandalous to many. The speech of the ass seems simply ludicrous to the wise men of our time, and its narrative almost indecorous in the pages of the Bible. Men of science do not agree on the question as to whether the event took place in a state of wakefulness or in a dream. German commentators, even the orthodox ones, are inclined to consider the apparition of the angel and the speech of the ass as instructive hallucinations inspired by God in

the caravan which was waiting for him and advancing slowly. A few minutes later Balaam was already amongst the Moabite

order to teach Balaam. The event may, however, be sufficiently explained by referring to the following considerations:—‘St. Gregory of Nyssa in his work, *De Vita Mosis*, note E, says that in all probability the voice of the ass had only meaning to Balaam himself, and was accessible solely to his comprehension. Maimonides, cited by Grotius *in loco* (see Bauer and Hengstenberg, *Geschichte Bil.* p. 48 *et seq.*), supposed that it all took place in a vision. But this is not in accordance with the Holy Scriptures, where the action causing the fear in the animal is particularly brought forward’ (Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, Book of Numbers, xxiii. 31, note 10). In the wonderful event, which the blasphemers of the Bible have ready as an arm against the truth of the Word of God, the circumstance of the ass recognising the presence of the angel of God before Balaam must not be looked upon as a difficulty. It is well known that animals have a finer and more vivid perception of many of the phenomena of nature, such as earthquakes, thunderstorms, etc., than men with their five organs of sense. It is also undoubted that some animals, such as horses and cows, have so-called second sight, and are therefore sometimes frightened. The stumblingblock in the present narrative lies in the reasonable speech of an unreasoning and speechless ass. It is true that the conversation does not go further than the sensations usually expressed by starts and unnatural sounds when animals are ill treated; but here these manifestations were expressed in the form of human speech, of which animals are not capable, and the question suggests itself whether this miracle is to be understood as an inward process of Balaam’s ecstatic nature, or in the sense of an outward event. If we compare the arguments advanced by Hengstenberg in favour of the first version, and those of Kurtz in favour of the second, we find nothing convincing in them, given the circumstance that the fact of Balaam’s state of ecstasy is not mentioned, nor the indication, ‘*The Lord opened the mouth of the ass*,’ nor finally the words of the Apostle Peter, ‘*The dumb ass speaking with man’s voice forbade the madness of the prophet*’ (2 Peter ii. 16). None of them contain any obligatory proofs for declaring, ‘Just as the ass was clearly and outwardly visible at that moment, so must the speech have reached the ear externally and materially’ (Kurtz, *Gesch.*). In both the Scriptural testimonies the fact remains clearly indubitable that the ass spoke in a language comprehensible to Balaam, and that this was a supernatural event, for the Lord opened the lips of the ass. These testimonies do not mention in what manner Balaam received the animal’s speech, whether outwardly, that is to say, by means of the corresponding bodily organ, or by means of an inward spiritual ear. On the other hand, we do not see any definite proofs of the events being only inward, and experienced by Balaam in a state of ecstasy, because Balaam did not express astonishment at the speech of the ass, or that the servants who accompanied him and the Moabite messengers did not see the apparition of the angel, nor hear the speech of the ass, for it is well known that *argumenta e silentio* do not prove much. We may repeat the words of St. Augustine concerning Balaam (quest. 50 in *Num.*): ‘That he was carried away by such greediness that not only was he

elders, who venerated him so deeply, and continued his way with them towards the hills of the land of Moab.

not frightened by so wonderful a miracle, but he answered as if he were conversing with a man, although God did not convert the soul of the ass into that of a reasonable being, but, as it pleased Him, made her to utter sounds to restrain Balaam's folly.' The question necessarily arises whether the Moabite messengers heard and saw the event. It is very possible that they were either at some distance in front, or had fallen back while Balaam saw the vision. As to Balaam's two servants, there was no need to specially mention them, or inquire whether they had seen the vision and heard the conversation of the ass, as this circumstance is of no importance for the principal object of the narrative. It cannot either be affirmed that the speech of the ass, taken as having happened in the material sense, removes the eternal bounds placed in the first chapter of Genesis between the world of man and the world of animals. These bounds would only have been infringed if the conversation of the ass had gone beyond the sensations of an animal, and had really enunciated thoughts accessible only to human understanding; but this was not the case in the present circumstance. All that was said by the ass refers solely to the sphere of animal intelligence. The right view to take is the medium course between representing the whole event as a purely inward process which took place during Balaam's trance, caused by the will of God, and the coarse material debasement of the event into an absolutely material acceptance. The angel who went out to encounter the soothsayer on his way was immediately noticed by the ass and by Balaam only after Jehovah had opened his eyes; he appeared in the outward material world on the path, but the form in which he appeared was not that of a coarse material body, like the bodily form of an earthly being; for in the opposite case Balaam must have immediately seen him when his frightened and stupefied ass twice refused to advance, for it is not said that God struck Balaam with blindness, as He did the Sodomites (Gen. xix. 11), or the people (2 Kings vi. 18). On the contrary, the angel appeared as a spirit, which is not visible to every person with bodily, healthy eyes, but only to those who are capable of discerning the phenomena of the spiritual world. Thus, for example, the men who went with Paul to Damascus did not see any one when the Lord shone the light from heaven on him and spake with him, though they heard a voice (Acts ix. 7). The spiritual capacity of feeling the presence of the angel of the Lord was wanting in Balaam, for his spiritual eye was blinded by the passionate craving after honours and riches. This blindness increased with the excitement of the repeated opposition of the animal he rode, so that he lost all power of reasoning. As his ass had never before shown herself stubborn, a little calm and reflection would have made him search for the cause of the animal's strange conduct, and he would have doubtless then discovered the presence of the angel; but as he had lost all capacity of reflection, God was pleased to open the mouth of a speechless animal to convict the soothsayer by profession of his blindness. . . . The speech of the ass was an act of Divine Omnipotence, but it is impossible to positively affirm whether through God's miracle the animal's voice was given a modulation, which reached

§ 6. But Balaam's frame of mind was now very different from that when he was journeying before the vision. Then he had been still from time to time consoled by the hope of receiving the Lord's consent to satisfy the Moabites' request, and he rejoiced at the thought of the precious gifts and honours which would be lavished upon him, and of his glorious return to his native land. Now, he felt himself but the involuntary executor of the designs of the Almighty, which were unknown to him; he pictured to himself with vexation the dissatisfaction of the Moabites at the undesirable results of their invitation. A painful feeling of weariness had replaced the doubts and expectations with which he had been previously consumed. Until the vision he had felt and believed in his force, now it seemed to him as if his wonderful magical force had left him. In short, at that moment the Mesopotamian soothsayer was troubled, crushed, defeated. The vision was the confirmation of what God had previously said to Balaam (ver. 20), and clearly implied that Balaam would be destroyed if he decided to act against the Lord's will. It was clear that he must now follow the divine tokens; and as the Lord had already revealed to him that the people come out of Egypt should not be cursed,

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Balaam's ears in the form of human words, or whether the sounds of the animal's voice under the direct influence of the divine action only took the form of comprehensible speech in Balaam's soul, so that he alone received and understood the animal's speech, and the servants present heard nothing but senseless animal sounds. In either case Balaam received from the lips of an unreasoning animal a lesson in humility, not only to make him ashamed, but at the same time to make him reflect and render him attentive to the voice of God. A detailed but unedifying polemical exposition of the different views as to the manner of understanding this event may be found in De Geer, *Dissert. de Bil.* pp. 164-183, and in Kurtz, *Geschichte d. alt. Bund.* ii. pp. 477-487; that which has just been exposed in abbreviation may be found *in extenso* in Keil's *Bibl. Comment. über die Bücher Mos.* pp. 321-323. The Blessed Theodoretus understood this event in the same manner (see *Christianskoe Tchtenie (Christian Reading)*, 1844, i. p. 69). The Hebrew scholar Philo has purposely omitted the episode of the talking ass from his work on the life of Moses in the first book which relates to the history of Balaam. H. Oort in his *Disputatio de Peric. Num.* xxii. 2-xxiv. pp. 52-60 proves sufficiently cleverly, but not convincingly, that these events are nothing but a myth composed of actual facts and fantastic figures.



for '*they are blessed*' (ver. 12), he understood that, in spite of the general meaning of the expression, '*The word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do,*' God would never act in favour of the Moabites, although they might seem doomed to destruction. He must now accompany the princes of Balak, not with the definite object of cursing the Israelites, but with the obligation of doing that which would be inspired from on high. The trust of the Moabite elders in his power not only no longer flattered him; but, on the contrary, it oppressed him still more. He would doubtless have gladly returned home and escaped from his fellow-travellers, never to see them or hear of them more, but that was out of the question. The terrible vision with the sword in hand rose before his mental gaze, and the words of the mysterious denizen of heaven rang in his ears: '*I went out to withstand thee . . .* (ver. 32), *surely now also I had slain thee . . .* (ver. 33), *only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak*' (ver. 35).<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime, some of the elders had probably separated themselves from the caravan and hurried on beforehand to announce to their sovereign the arrival of the much-desired guest. As soon as Balak received the news of the famous Mesopotamian soothsayer's approach, he set off from his capital (residence) to meet him on the northern frontiers of his kingdom '*unto a city of Moab, which is in the border of Arnon, which is in the utmost coast*' (ver. 36); that is to say, '*at the stream of the brooks that goeth down to the dwelling of Ar, and lieth upon the border of Moab*' (Num. xxi. 15).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> All this was sufficient to show Balaam that it was not the journey itself which was displeasing to God, but the disposition of mind in which he had undertaken it. The whole event was such as to sharpen his conscience and sober his spirit, so that he should be ready to receive the words which God would place in his mouth (see Keil's *Comment.* on this passage).

<sup>2</sup> The expression '*city of Moab*' denotes in the present case the former capital of the land of Moab, עִיר מוֹאָב, or Ar Moab, recently taken away from the Moabites by Sihon, king of the Amorites (Num. xxi. 26). 'It is undoubted and generally known that the Moabite city is identical with the one named in other passages of the Bible Ar, without the addition of "Moab," and

However, the frame of mind of the Moabite king was apparently not a joyful one. Balaam's dilatoriness, his seemingly cunning refusal to satisfy Balak's request at his first appeal, had wounded the latter's pride. The king of Moab could not but see arrogance and self-sufficiency on the part of the Mesopotamian soothsayer, and undoubtedly resented them in his heart; but the mysterious, awe-inspiring personality of the magian, and especially the danger which threatened his country, probably prevented the king from openly expressing his displeasure to Balaam. Nevertheless,

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later Areopolis' (see Gesen. *Thesaur.* p. v.). We see from this citation that this town was situated on the borders of the Moabite land, namely, on the northern frontier which is formed by the Arnon, now the Modjeb. This is also confirmed by the following passage of the Book of Deuteronomy (ii. 36): 'From Aroer, which is by the brink of the river of Arnon, and from the city that is by the river, even unto Gilead, there was not one city too strong for us: the Lord our God delivered all unto us.' The city which is by the Arnon in its valley is opposed here to Aroer, which is near the river Arnon. The city in the valley of the Arnon is no other than that, which every one remembers, because it first of all bore the name of 'city.' That Ar lay on the immediate frontier of the Moabite land is clear, for it is mentioned as lying in the valley of Arnon, which was always looked on as the frontier of the Moabitish, Amorite, and Israelite lands (cf. Deut. iii. 16, 'And unto the Reubenites and unto the Gadites I gave from Gilead even unto the river Arnon half the valley, and the border even unto the river Jabbok, which is the border of the children of Ammon'). As to the expression וְנָבִיל, see Gesen. *Thesaur.* p. 364, by which the

northern half of the valley of Arnon belonged already to the Amorite-Israelite territory, and also because this town was always looked upon as the *terminus a quo* of the Israelite conquests, which evidently presupposes that it was situated exactly on the frontier. We find a confirmation of the same in Josh. xiii. 9-16, 'the city that is in the midst of the river.' Here Ar is mentioned as determining the boundaries of the Israelite dominions (*terminus a quo*) in opposition to Aroer, which is included in the dominions (Hengstenberg, *Bil.* pp. 344, 345). The following passage of the Book of Numbers (xxi. 14, 15) gives us a still clearer insight into the situation of the place: 'Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the Lord, What he did in the Red Sea, and in the brooks of Arnon, and at the stream of the brooks that goeth down to the dwelling of Ar, and lieth upon the border of Moab.' According to this, Ar lay on the northern border of the land of Moab, as the other side, the land of the Amorites, had been conquered by the Israelites, who are here mentioned, and especially there, where the Arnon receives the water of many other brooks. This last indication gives the exact definition of the situation of the city of Moab at the

Balak could not quite conceal his feelings, and expressed them in a tone of wounded astonishment and subtle reproach: '*And Balak said unto Balaam, Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee? wherefore camest thou not unto me? am I not able indeed to promote thee to honour?*' (ver. 37.) Balak probably imagined that Balaam was entirely master of his actions; that the destructive force of his words was not limited by a higher power. Balaam saw the immediate necessity of moderating the expectations of the king of Moab, who thought that the possibility of pronouncing the curse against Israel

confluence of the river Arnon or Ledshum (the identity of both will be later proved). No other but the Ledshum and its affluents can be meant by the brooks of Arnon which extend to the Ar (see Burckhardt, p. 635, German transl.). 'The principal source of the Modjeb is situated not far from Catrana, about an hour's distance to the east of the bridge; it receives the waters of the Ledshum, which flows from the north-east through a deep ravine. The Ledshum takes in the small stream of Seyl-el-Mekzreys and Balua.' Farther to the east there is no such confluence of streams. Besides, farther on, the Nahaliel or Ledshum is plainly mentioned. 'After having reached the northern side of the Arnon, the Hebrews went on first of all to Beer, from there leaving the desert at Matana, probably Tedun, near the source of the Ledshum; they came to the Ledshum, or Nahaliel itself, and thus took possession of the land irrigated by the water-courses of the Arnon' (pp. 235, 236). Therefore the city of Moab probably occupied the place which Burckhardt describes on p. 636, where he also, though doubtfully, searches for Areopolis: 'At the confluence of the Ledshum and Modjeb appeared a beautiful meadow, in the midst of which stood a promontory with several ruins. When we mounted the southern eminence, which rises from the Modjeb, we took a straight path at about five minutes' distance from the bridge past the ruins of a small fortress, of which the foundations alone remain. Near these ruins is a reservoir, which is filled by the Ledshum (?) by means of a canal. This is perhaps the place where lay the ancient city of Areopolis.' This description corresponds with that of the Book of Numbers xxi. 28, where Ar is placed in parallel to the high places of Arnon. The description made by Eusebius and Hieronymus, according to whose testimony Areopolis forms the frontier of Moab from the rocky valley to the north of this town (S. V. 'Αρνων) δεικνυται εἰς ἐτι νῦν τόπος παραγγώδης σφόδρα χαλεπὸς ὁ Ἀρνων ὀνομαζόμενος παρατείνων ἐπὶ τὰ βορεῖα τῆς Ἀρεοπόλεως ἐν ᾧ καὶ φρουρία πανταχοῦθεν φυλάττει στρατιωτικῶ διὰ φόβερων τὸν τόπον (cf. Reland, *Pal.* i. 5, 358, 435), seems quite near to nature, and agrees perfectly with the terrible, wild, deep, and rocky valley where the Modjeb flows in a narrow bed, where Seetzen (p. 432) arrived during his journey to the south of Dibon, which thus lay just to the north of the point in which we suppose Areopolis to have been situated (Hengstenberg, *Bibl.* pp. 236-239; Raumer, *Pal.* 1850, p. 237).

depended on Balaam's coming. He therefore answered Balak by a short but impressive justification of himself, explaining both the circumstances of the expected event and the dependence of his wonderful gift on a higher will than his own: '*And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say any thing? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak*' (ver. 38). A note of regret sounds in these words. Balaam feels the weight of his bondage, and is full of pity for the unfortunate king who has put all his hopes in him. It is natural that Balak felt much alarmed at such an answer, so that his next question to Balaam was as to how and by what the Divinity might be propitiated. '*Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*' (Micah vi. 6, 7.) In accordance with the terrible customs of his country (2 Kings iii. 27), Balak was even ready in case of need to offer in sacrifice his eldest son as a means of propitiating the wrath of God. Balaam should have answered his despairing appeal with the words of the Lord (Deut. x. 12): '*He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*' (Micah vi. 8.) Whether Balak would have understood such words, or not, is doubtful; but, in any case, he fully trusted in Balaam's magic help, and set off for Kirjath-huzoth (literally, the town of cattle-sheds), a settlement of shepherds' huts,<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The place to which Balak took Balaam (ver. 39) is differently interpreted in the Greco-Slavonic and Russian translations. It seems that the Septuagint read the Hebrew locution קִרְיַת הָעֹזָה as קִרְיֹת הָעֹזָה, and took it for the nominative case, πόλεις ἐπαύλεων—city of huts, little settlements surrounded by walls; the Massoreth, probably on the foundation of some more authentic tradition, read קִרְיַת הָעֹזָה, that is to say, they took the word defined

accompanied by the soothsayer, plunged in painful meditations, and by his elders. Balak gave orders that Balaam and his fellow-travellers should be lodged here for the night in separate huts, so that they might rest after their long and wearisome journey. There also the king commanded, in accordance with the customs of the time (Gen. xxxi. 54, xliii. 16, 34), that a feast should be made ready; he ordered that oxen and sheep should be killed; and that meat prepared after the fashion of the time should be sent to the wearied travellers (Num. xxii. 40).<sup>1</sup> The night set in (cf. ver. 41).

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קְרִיָּה in the singular form, status construct., and saw in this expression the proper name of the city. The translation of the Septuagint designates an unknown place, whilst the Russian translation from the Massoreth text apparently indicates the town in the land of Moab, which in the writings of the later prophets bore the name of Kerieth or Kirieth (Jer. xlviii. 24, 41; Amos ii. 2).

<sup>1</sup> Western theologians see a sacred character in this act of Balak. According to the opinions of De Geer, Hengstenberg, Ewald, and Keil, the king of Moab had offered a sacrifice, and only sent the remains of the sacrificed meat to Balaam and to his princes. The opinions are different as to what Deity the sacrifice was offered to, whether to Jehovah or to the Moabite god Chemosh, and as to what the object was, whether a thank-offering for the arrival of the expected guest or a propitiation (see De Geer, *Bil.* pp. 49, 50; Hengstenberg, *Bil.* pp. 68, 69; Ewald, *Jahrbücher d. bibl. Wissenschaft*, viii. p. 11; Keil's, *comment, in loco*). This question is, however, unimportant.

## CHAPTER V

### A BLESSING INSTEAD OF A CURSE

§ 1. THE entire preceding narrative describes the events related in the twenty-second chapter of the Book of Numbers connectively with the facts and conditions of life contemporary with them. The arrival of Balaam from Mesopotamia to the borders of the land of Moab with the object of cursing the Israelites has been represented as fully as possible with all the material accessories accompanying the event, and with a thorough investigation of the causes and circumstances by which it was called forth. The consequences of this fact, namely, the efforts of Balaam to curse the Israelites in order to please the Moabites, are contained in the twenty-third and twenty-fourth chapters of the Book of Numbers.

As, contrary to Balaam's expectations, the Lord refused to hearken to him, and turned his (intended) curse into a blessing for the Israelites (Deut. xxiii. 4, 5; Josh. xxiv. 9, 10), these chapters may therefore be regarded as a description of the history and nature of Balaam's blessings to the chosen people. Each of these blessings represents by its form and substance a short but inspired prophetic speech, called a parable <sup>לשׁוֹן</sup>. By calling the blessings of the magian Balaam parables, the sacred historian probably intended to show that every blessing of Balaam represents in itself an instructive speech called forth by an elevated and inspired frame of mind in consequence of the supernatural illumination of Balaam's soul relatively to the future destinies of Israel and its foes (cf. Ps. xlix. 4, lxxviii. 2; Isa. xiv. 4; Ezek. xvii. 2). Balaam pronounced

seven such blessings in parables from various high places in sight of the Israelite camp. The first four refer exclusively to the chosen people in connection with the tribes to whom it stood in relationship, while the last three consist of prophecies relating to the fate of the stranger nations which only came into temporary contact of any importance with the people of Israel. The three first parables contained in chap. xxiii. 7-10, 18-24, and chap. xxiv. 3-9, which may be called, properly speaking, blessings, representing the condition of Israel in the time of Moses, rise one above the other in form and substance, and expand progressively. The '*inspired word*' which they transmit, beginning calmly and with measure, gradually rises till the whole is finally penetrated with inspiration, so that four more parables are required for the full effusion of this supernatural breathing of the Divine Spirit. These four last parables are blessings which bear the character of a divine prophecy in the exact sense of the word, that is to say, a prophecy touching the most distant destinies of mankind under the guidance of the right hand of the Most High. Taken in particular, in the first parable, Balaam expresses the impossibility of cursing Israel, as God Himself will not curse His people; in the second, he testifies that Israel is blessed, and that this blessing cannot be revoked, for it comes from God; in the third, he affirms that those who bless Israel will be blessed, and those who curse Israel will be cursed. In the first parable, the multiplicity and happy future of the people of Israel is indicated; in the second, the victorious struggle of the Israelites with their enemies and the destruction of the latter; in the third, the elevation of the Israelites over other nations, and the security of their political existence in consequence of their victories. In the first parable, Balaam puts forward the exclusive political situation of the Israelites in consequence of their having been chosen by God as a kingdom of priests and a sacred nation; in the second parable, he indicates the invisible presence of God amongst the Israelites

in the words and actions of the prophets; in the third, he describes the beauty of the Israelite settlements, the lawfulness of the inner social relations between the members of the chosen people and the fertility of the land they inhabit. The first parable begins with a calm statement of Balak's motive in calling Balaam; the second, by Balaam's solemn charge to Balak; the third, by the glorification of the prophetic inspiration which has taken possession of his soul, and by the solemn testimony of the divine source of his inspiration. In the fourth parable (xxiv. 15-19) Balaam prophesies the distant apparition of a divine victorious star which shall come out from the bosom of Israel, and shall smite and destroy the Moabites and Edomites who hate Israel; in the fifth parable (ver. 20), he prophesies the destruction of Amalek; in the sixth (vers. 21, 22), the destruction of the Kenites; and in the seventh (vers. 23, 24), the subjugation of the Assyrians and the destruction of their terrible conqueror Gog. By their general plan and the unity of their fundamental idea, the four last parables form, as it were, one prophecy. It represents the victorious conclusion of the Israelites' struggles with their foes and their final security, whilst their temporary and more distant enemies perish in their mutual struggles. This prophecy opens by a solemn repetition of Balaam's testimony of his divine inspiration; it consists of four distinct and complete propositions concerning Moab, Edom, Amalek, and the Kenites (vers. 17-22), and concludes with a representation of the distant future expressed in fragmentary but expressive terms.

#### THE MEANS AND CONDITIONS OF THE CURSE

§ 2 (a) It has already been mentioned that Balaam had not found it expedient to conceal from the Moabite king the probability that invincible obstacles might stand in the way of the fulfilment of his ardent desire that the Israelites should be cursed (Num. xxii. 38). But Balak does not seem to have attached particular importance to this announcement, and remained



in the firm belief that the enchantments in the form of exorcisms of the Mesopotamian magian would have a destructive and paralysing influence on the Israelites. Therefore, hardly had the shades of night risen from the hills and fields of the Moabite land, when Balak rose from his royal couch, and early in the morning resolved to induce Balaam to pronounce the curse which was to strike the hated terrible strangers come out from Egypt, fill them with terror, paralyse their energies both spiritual and bodily, and cause them to be overtaken by a panic of fear at the attack of the Moabite warriors. According to the popular belief of the time, a curse could only be efficacious if it was pronounced in a certain manner and under certain conditions, one of which was the proximity between the enchanter and the object to be cursed; it was also necessary that the latter should be within the scope of vision of the magian, whose complete security at the moment when the curse was pronounced was required, as well as a certain elevation of the place from which he uttered his curse. It has been already explained<sup>1</sup> that, owing to the similarity of form and effects, a parallel might be drawn between a curse, as the action of one person's will over that of another or several persons, and the results of hypnotism, so that a curse might be placed in the category of hypnotic phenomena, which equally can only be practised in close proximity, even in the case of extreme power on the part of the hypnotiser and great receptivity or predisposition on the part of the subjects to be cursed. In the practice of hypnotism the contact of the hypnotiser's hand with that of the person hypnotised is a condition that lies at the basis of magnetism. In the present case it is only by this circumstance that the twice repeated call for Balaam to come from the distant land of Mesopotamia to the land of Moab<sup>2</sup> can be explained. However, proximity

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<sup>1</sup> See chap. ii. : 'Blessing and Cursing.'

<sup>2</sup> If such a conviction had not existed, and if really the action of the magian's will could reach any distance, the Moabites would not have needed

alone was still considered insufficient; what was required here, as in hypnotic phenomena, was that nothing, except air, should intervene between the exorciser and the object of his conjurations. The pronouncing of the curse, as a peculiar action of the will, affects its victim spiritually only when there is no other person or object standing in the direct line of the movement of this deadly breath. All the cases of ancient curses known to us were uttered in sight of those who were cursed; at such a distance that the victim not only remained within the sphere of the magian's vision, but had to be seen distinctly, whether it was a separate individual or a conjunction of several people. This condition for the efficacy of the curse in Mesopotamia gave rise to a general and deeply-rooted belief in the destructiveness of the 'evil eye.'<sup>1</sup> This evidently gives the clue to the reason why some of the Chaldean enchanters made use of likenesses, secretly taken, of persons who were apparently inaccessible, and whom they wanted to bewitch.<sup>2</sup>

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to send to fetch Balaam from so far, and he himself would not have undertaken so long a journey, but would have pronounced his curse out of sight of the Israelites. The importance of the proximity of the exorciser to the exorcised is proved by the fact that in all the narratives that have reached us about exorcisms and enchantments, the question of the proximity of the enchanter to his victim is always put forward as an indispensable condition.

<sup>1</sup> The Chaldeans firmly believed in the 'evil eye,' the baneful action of which was so often paralysed by the exorcising power of the magic formula; they also believed in the malignant power of certain words, the fatal effect of which is obvious, even if they are spoken unintentionally and without a wicked motive; the 'evil tongue' and the 'evil word' are, therefore, almost always included under the 'evil eye' (Lenormant, *Magie*, pp. 40, 41). Other nations, amongst them the ancient Slavonians, had the same belief.

<sup>2</sup> Amongst the formulas of a certain great exorcism, there is 'one (the sixth) which warns against a maker of likenesses'; bewitchment by means of a likeness of the person to be harmed was one of the most frequent operations of Chaldean necromancy. This is often mentioned in magic texts; and, what is still more remarkable, is the declaration of an Arabian writer, Ibn-Kaldun, who lived in the fourteenth century of our era, and mentions, as an eye-witness, that this form of witchcraft was general amongst the Nebajoth enchanters of the Lower Euphrates, who had inherited more or less mutilated traditions from the most ancient inhabitants of the country. 'We saw with our own eyes,' says Ibn-Kaldun, 'how one of the necromancers

But as 'the evil eye' is the expression of a conscious movement of the will clothed in the spirit of the enchanter in a material envelope of looks or words, therefore the Chaldean magic exorcisms mention side by side with 'the evil eye' the baneful power of certain words which are capable of calling forth fatal effects, even when pronounced innocently and unintentionally; this is why the 'evil tongue' and the 'evil word' are nearly always mentioned at the same time as the 'evil eye.'<sup>1</sup>

But when it came to striking a whole nation with crushing anxiety and shuddering horror, either by the peculiarly strong pressure of an exasperated will, or by calling forth the destructive elements of nature, it was found absolutely necessary that the magian or enchanter should feel himself in perfect security at the moment of accomplishing the act of cursing, so that the whole energy of his magic will might be directed against those to be cursed. Balak and Balaam had undoubtedly this in view in the present case; but how was it to be done? It was far from safe to go too near to the Israelite camp—such a risk might be paid for at the price of liberty and even life; for the martial spirit was strong in the sons of Jacob in those warlike times, and they were constantly on the alert as to the movements of the surrounding tribes. Balaam might be taken prisoner and slain by them before he had time to utter his curses and the Israelites experience their destructive force. Nothing, therefore, remained but to choose a place which should be neither too far from nor too near the people doomed to be cursed; and, above all, that should give the possibility of seeing the Israelites distinctly. Evidently nothing could answer these conditions but a mountain rising above the

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reproduced the likeness of a person whom he wished to bewitch. These likenesses are made of materials corresponding to the plans and intentions of the sorcerer, the symbolical signification of which corresponds, in a certain degree, with the name and position of the victim' (*Magie*, p. 73).

<sup>1</sup> See Lenormant, *Magie*, pp. 40, 41.

surrounding places, for there was still another point that must be borne in view—Balaam could only curse the Israelites with the consent of Jehovah; and, according to the ancient Mesopotamian creed, the communications of man with the Invisible Deity and the transmission of His power could be accomplished most often and most fully from some elevated point. Special pyramidal elevations were erected in Chaldea with this object, and were called ‘observatory towers.’<sup>1</sup> The Romans observed the same custom. A German archaeologist says: ‘A promontory with an extensive horizon was always chosen for this object. In towns some castle (or tower) was generally chosen, and here, apparently, a tent was pitched on the top, for a particular place on the tower, called “auguraculum,” was continually devoted and destined to this purpose. Outside the towns, isolated promontories, rarely visited, were chosen, and received the name of “tesca,” from *tueri*, on account of the vast expanse of horizon which they commanded.’<sup>2</sup> We see in the history of the Hebrews that sometimes blessings and curses affecting many persons were pronounced from the heights of Mounts Ebal and Gerizim (Deut. xi. 27, xxvii. 12, 13). It was therefore apparently decided in the present case to choose a sacred mountain from whence the camp of the Israelites might be seen in security and the divine inspiration be confidently expected. Such a promontory was afforded by the sacred mount of Baal, or the high place of Baal<sup>3</sup> (ver. 41; cf. xxiii. 9), situated on the road

<sup>1</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, pp. 402, 403, 440.

<sup>2</sup> See Hengstenberg, pp. 76, 77; Hartung, *Hom. Theol.* i. p. 118.

<sup>3</sup> The essential difference between the Greco-Slavonic and the Russian translation of the 41st verse consists in the fact that the Septuagint read  $\beta\epsilon\lambda\beta\epsilon\lambda$ , supposing that the word  $\beta\epsilon\lambda$ , ‘height,’ was used in the singular number in the sense of a column, a rock, a steep hill, a monument; meanwhile the Massoreths read  $\beta\epsilon\lambda\beta\epsilon\lambda\beta\epsilon\lambda$ , that is to say, in the plural number, and the translators of the Synod interpreted literally as the ‘heights’ of Baal. It seems that neither translation, that is, neither the Greco-Slavonic nor the

from Kirjath-huzoth in the direction of the Israelites' camp, not far from the sources of the Arnon (near the town of Dibon).

Russian transmits the sense of the quoted passage with sufficient accuracy. The word  $\pi\pi\epsilon$  in the sense of  $\sigma\tau\eta\lambda\eta$  (Septuagint), column, steep hill, or monument, does not convey the peculiar situation of the ground, which we feel must have here existed; the Russian translation gives a more correct indication by the expression 'the heights of Baal,' for in Num. xxiii. 9 it is said: 'From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him' (in the Septuagint  $\beta\omicron\upsilon\nu\omega\nu$ , 'I look at him'). The word 'heights' had a technical signification for the inhabitants of Palestine, and usually indicated an elevated place, covered with woods, consecrated to the gods, and serving as a place of religious worship. The 'heights' had the same signification amongst the Moabites (see Bishop Chrysanthus, *Religions of the Ancient World*, ii. pp. 279-299, and in the article, 'The newly discovered monument of the Moabite king Meshi,' Chwolson, *Journal: Christian Reading* (*Christianskoe Tschenie*), 1870, ii. p. 303). We can only conjecture as to the situation of the heights of Baal; foreign commentators of the Bible determine approximatively the situation of the 'heights of Baal' in the following manner: According to the generally accepted opinion, the heights of Baal and Bamoth designate the same place, situated near the town of Dibon (according to Josephus, a distance of sixty stadia from the camp of the Israelites), as these names are all mentioned side by side in the Book of Joshua (xiii. 17): 'Bamoth was situated between the Nahaliel, and the valley of the plain of Moab above Fasgi, which rises above the desert' (that is to say, above the Moabite plain). The Nahaliel is the present wady Ledshum, which falls into the wady Modjeb (the Arnon) at Mahatengael-Hadsch; Bamoth therefore lay to the north or north-west of this point; according to Joshua (xiii. 17) Bamoth was situated between Dibon (the present Diban near the Arnon) and Beth-baal-meon (half a mile to the south of Heshbon). In fact, Burckhardt (p. 632) identifies the Nahaliel, God's stream, with Balé, but this supposition cannot be accepted unconditionally, as, according to the remark of Burckhardt himself, this name is unknown to the Arabs, and the situation does not correspond with the facts. The Israelites came from the Nahaliel to Bamoth, which lies, as will be shown later, in the land of Dibon, and the Balé flows to the north of Dibon, so that the Israelites must have reached Dibon before coming to Balé. Evidently the Nahaliel should rather be the Ledshum. The arguments in favour of this version are—(1) *The name.* It is used until now, Burckhardt says (p. 635); at the distance of nearly an hour to the east of the bridge, it (the Modjeb) receives the waters of the Ledshum, which flows from the north out of a deep channel. The Ledshum receives the little stream of Seyl el-Mekzreys, and after that the Balua. (2) *The situation.* If we identify the Nahaliel with the Ledshum, the Israelites travelled from Jahza or Beer-Elim in a straight north-western direction to the plains of Moab. They went from Beer to Matana, then to the spot, Tedun, mentioned, it seems, by Burckhardt, p. 635 ('near the source of the Ledshum are the ruins of the town of Tedun'), from there to the Nahaliel or Ledshum, to Dibon and Bamoth,

King Balak, accompanied by his princes and elders, brought Balaam to this height that from '*thence he might see the utmost*

to Almon-Diblathaim, then before Nebo, reaching at last the plains of Moab.

The second point required to explain the situation of Bamoth-Baal is to find out the topography of 'the valley which is on the plain of Moab above Faggi, and which faces the desert.' The plain of Moab is a high plain which in some places, as in the neighbourhood of Elalé, is bare of woods, or covered with the remains of ruined towns. This elevated plain runs down eastwards to the Arabian desert, and to the west it reaches the Jordan. It is identical with the plain of 'Medeba unto Dibon' in Joshua xiii. 9; compare the expression 'all the plain by Medeba' (ver. 16) with the expression 'Heshbon and all her cities that are in the plain' (ver. 21) and 'all the cities of the plain' (Deut. iii. 10).

A closer indication of the topographical situation of Bamoth-Baal is given by the passage of Joshua xiii. 17, where, amongst the towns of Reuben, Bamoth-Baal is named in immediate proximity to Dibon, if we connect it with the circumstance that in Num. xxxiii. 46 Bamoth-Baal is omitted and Dibon alone mentioned. Modern travellers determine very accurately the situation of Dibon. Seetzen says (p. 431): 'The next day we crossed a short stream, or Bach-Alvale, which flows in a rocky bed and falls into the Dead Sea; at a distance of two hours and a half farther (to the south) we came to the ruins of Dibon. A beautiful plain surrounds the former city.' Burckhardt says (p. 632): 'We reached the banks of wady Modjeb—the Arnon of the Holy Scriptures—in six and a half hours' time (two hours from the mountain on the south side of Balé). When I was at about an hour's distance from the Modjeb, I was shown to the north-east the ruins of Dibon, the ancient Dibon, situated in the lower valley of the Kur.'

Bamoth-Baal is in all probability the mountain mentioned as being on the south side of Balé, at an hour's distance from Dibon, on the summit of which is a beautiful valley (see Burckhardt, p. 632).

The indications of the Onomastikon, according to which the 'heights of Baal' are situated in the region of the Arnon, coincide with this situation of Bamoth-Baal (see Hengstenberg, *Bil.* pp. 239-243). Balak with Balaam and the princes reached the 'heights of Baal' undoubtedly by the north-western side, as at that time the Israelites had evidently pitched their camp to the north-west of the Arnon and of the town of Ar, where the meeting of the Moabite king and the Mesopotamian soothsayer had taken place. It is very possible that the town of Dibon alone stood there, and that the name of Bamoth was given to the heights where a sacrificial altar may have been erected, belonging to the town and situated in its outskirts. (The temple of Bel in Babylon stood in the same manner beyond the precincts of the town.) That Bamoth and Dibon indicate the same locality, or two places very near each other, may be the reason why Bamoth is not mentioned amongst the principal camps enumerated in Num. xxxiii., and the name of Dibon-Gad stands instead of it (see Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, iii. ; Num. xxi. 19, note 14).

part of the people' (ver. 41), so as to increase the destructiveness of the impending curse.<sup>1</sup>

When Balaam reached the heights of Baal, and from there saw a part of the hated people 'come out of Egypt,' a feeling of indignation and malevolence arose once more in his heart, and he felt an increased desire to overwhelm this people either with the destructive force of the elements of nature or to inspire them with a crushing; paralysing dread. He would have liked that at his mighty word, at the first contest with the Moabites, the Israelites would have fled in confusion and have been dispersed. The desire flashed through his brain to smite them with horrible, incurable diseases: 'with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch . . . and with blindness and astonishment of heart'<sup>2</sup> (Deut. xxviii. 27, 28). But he could not forget yesterday's terrible apparition of the Angel and his command (Num. xxiii. 31-35); it may be also that he had never yet had the audacity

<sup>1</sup> In the Greco-Slavonic text of the 41st verse: ПОКАЗА ЕМУ ѠТЪСАХ ЧАСТЬ НЪКЪЮ ЛЮДЕЙ; μέρος τοῦ λαοῦ (showed to him some part of the people), this interpretation leads us to suppose that Balaam saw distinctly from the heights of Baal only a small portion of the Israelite camp, and not the whole people of Israel, of which a part were undoubtedly encamped on the Amorite plains. This is the opinion of Hengstenberg, *Bil.* p. 48; the same version is given by the Vulgate, by the Syrian text, and by Onkelos. From the heights of Baal, the valleys of Moab, where the camps of the greater part of the Israelites were at that time pitched, can scarcely be seen; therefore Balaam could only see the end of the Israelite camp in dim outlines, as if wrapped in a mist (Oort, *Disput. de Per.* xxii.-xxiv. p. 12 ad l.).

<sup>2</sup> It is a general belief common to all nations, that the consequences of a curse, or of an evil spell, declare themselves by some disease, melancholia, dark forebodings, dimness of consciousness, delusive visions, hallucinations, madness, involuntary, vain fear, forgetfulness, antipathy to friends and relations, weakness, sterility, bad harvests, sickness and disease of cattle, etc. (see Lenorm. *Magie*, pp. 9, 10, 44, 75; Afanassiev, *Witchcraft in Russia*, pp. 57-59; Calm. *Comment. ad Num.* xxii. 6). The important part which terror or panic fear plays in the hostile relations between nations is confirmed by the indication that the Lord, who had condemned to destruction (cursed) the people of Canaan, helped the Israelites to fulfil His design by striking their foes with fear and terror before the face of the Israelites (Exod. xxiii. 27, and Deut. xxviii. 20, 65, 66).

to curse a whole nation without invoking the Divinity in prayer. However this may have been, Balaam found it indispensable to appeal to God for help and guidance as to how he should act in view of Balak's insistence that calamities should be called down upon the Israelites.

But in those times an invocation to the Deity was not to be thought of without a sacrifice as the palpable expression of devotion, obedience, and veneration. 'Sacrifices formed the principal element of the ancient divine services, and were the prelude to every important undertaking; it was by means of sacrifices that the Divinity was inclined in favour of the supplicants and success obtained. When Æneas questioned the sibyl concerning the future, he sacrificed seven oxen and seven sheep (Virgil, *Æn.* vi. 37, etc.) and during conjurations and magic practices the gods' sympathies were implored by sacrifices, hymns, and prayers' (Plato, *de Legg.* 10, p. 909; Apoll. Rhod. 3, 1031 *et seq.*; Ovid, *Metamorph.* 7, 240 *et seq.*). The same may be said of the Chaldean priests, who, in the practice of mantology, divination, and predictions, tried to avert evil and do good by means of purifications, sacrifices, and exorcisms (Diod. Sicul. 2, 29); they had the capacity of binding the powers invoked by their sacred prayers, so as to make them fulfil the wishes of others, '*adjuratas sacri precibus potentias alligare*' (Augustin. *civit. Dei*, 10, 9 *et seq.*), and yet they did not permit themselves to utter any threats against the gods as did the Egyptians<sup>1</sup> (Iambl. *de Myst.* 6, 7). Much less could a worshipper of the living God like Balaam dispense with a sacrificial offering. Either because the number seven had a mystical and magic signification<sup>2</sup> in the Chaldean magical lore, or because a perfect propitiatory sacrifice required seven altars, seven calves, and seven rams (cf. Gen. xxi. 28,

<sup>1</sup> See Knobel, *Handb.* xxii. *zu Num.* xxiii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Lenorm. *Magie*, p. 24. The number seven had also an important and mysterious signification amongst the Greeks and Romans (Ideler, *Chronologie*, part i. p. 89; Ritter, *Gesch. d. Philos.* i. p. 405).



Job xlii. 8; 1 Chron. xv. 26; 2 Chron. xxix. 21), Balaam proposed to the Moabite king to build seven altars of stone and to prepare seven oxen and seven rams (Num. xxiii. 1). According to the belief of those times such a sacrifice would be agreeable to God and might take away the sin of Balaam and the Moabites, and with their sin remove the curse (apparently) weighing upon them, in the shape of the offensive proximity of the Israelites. Balak at once fulfilled Balaam's directions, and soon after both king and magian, equally interested in the desired result, offered to the true God<sup>1</sup> (Num. xxiii. 2-4) a full sacrifice of propitiation and solicitation, consisting of a bullock and a ram on each of the seven altars. And then, when the flames enveloped the sacrificial meat and the smoke ascended to the heavens as the living symbol of the prayerful aspirations of the sacrificers towards the Invisible King of nations, Balaam again surrendered himself to his old feelings, and his hatred against the (apparent) foes of the Moabites rose like an unrestrainable storm, like a flame of wrath in the heart of the indignant enchanter. But his previous experience, and particularly the warning of the Angel (Num. xxii. 22-36) impelled him to turn to the Supreme Ordainer of human destinies in order to insure the success of

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<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt as to the sacrifice having been offered to Jehovah (De Geer, *Bil.* p. 52; Keil's *Comment. in loco*, and Num. xxiii. 4). It is equally beyond doubt that in this case Balaam was guided by the same divinely instituted custom which was followed by Job in the passage quoted, xlii. 8; but in drawing a parallel with the latter testimony, we are involuntarily led to suppose that Balaam's form of sacrifice was similar neither to that of the patriarchs (as may be concluded by Gen. xxi. 28) nor to that of the heathen, but that he kept to the general customs of sacrifice of the Mesopotamian monotheists; these sacrifices had a propitiatory character and were offered as an expiation for sins, for deliverance from punishment. 'This was the only means of rendering Jehovah favourable to prayers (exorcisms), for the ancients considered sacrifices a powerful means of obtaining the blessing of the gods, therefore Balaam regarded the sacrifice from the same point of view and believed that he would please Jehovah by his sacrifice, and would turn away the Lord's favour from the Israelites, and thus, by depriving them of their God's protection, render Balak's victory over them easier' (De Geer, *Bil.* p. 52).

his curses and to turn his fiery words into a destructive action. 'And Balaam said unto Balak: Stand by thy burnt offering, and I will go: peradventure the Lord will come to meet me; and whatsoever he sheweth me, I will tell thee' (Num. xxiii. 3).<sup>1</sup>

In what form did Balaam hope to receive the word of God? According to the testimony of the saints, God has condescended, in a certain degree, to make himself understood by manifesting His will in a manner accessible to the human mind. God revealed His will in particular to the prophets of the chosen people in two forms, either in visions (in a state of wakefulness similar to an ecstatic condition of semi-consciousness) or in dreams (Num. xii. 6). Balaam was apparently capable of receiving both forms of Divine revelation, in visions and in sleep. From the twenty-second chapter of Numbers, 8-20, it is evident that God appeared to him in his sleep, whilst in the same chapter, 22-35 and xxiv. 4, it is stated that he received the revelation of God in visions and by means of invisible voices. Except in sleep and visions, Balaam, like his Chaldean fellow-tribesmen, might be able to see and look for Divine manifestations in remarkable natural phenomena, in the peculiar colour of the

<sup>1</sup> In the above-quoted third verse, the Greco-Slavonic words *el phalverai* *ѡце ꙗвѣтца* are roughly and not quite accurately translated; even the reading, *el pws phalverai* (in the Aldine edition) *не ꙗвится ли какъ нибѹдь* ('will he not appear somehow'), is not quite appropriate. It would be certainly more correct to transmit the original Hebrew *אֵלַי* by the word *нѣгати* (peradventure he will appear, as in the eleventh verse of the twenty-second chapter). Under the circumstances, Balaam was by no means sure of the Lord's revealing His will to him, in his own inner self only; he was more inclined to think that Jehovah would manifest Himself to him by some remarkable phenomena and reveal their real signification to him (Hengstenberg, *Bil.* p. 74). The Hebrew *יְהוָה יִקְרָה יְהוָה לִקְרָאתִי* literally, 'will meet me to order me what I am to do'; *וְהַנִּדְבָר מִה יֵרְאֵנִי וְהַנִּדְבָרִי* literally, 'and what word of a thing will permit me to see' (*Criticor. Sacror.* and L. I. Vatablus), that is, 'the signs of what he will show me' (I will communicate to you).

clouds and the zigzags of lightning, in the appearance of so-called prophetic birds, in the direction of their flight, in their cries, in the movements of animals, particularly of serpents and dogs, in the rustle and movement of the trees.<sup>1</sup> In the present case Balaam had to act in the daytime, in the morning, in a waking condition, and in the presence of many persons. All this was most ill-adapted for receiving the Divine commands; for, under the circumstances, falling into a sleep or into a state of ecstasy was almost impossible, and those were the conditions most favourable for receiving the words of God.<sup>2</sup> Therefore it is not astonishing that Balaam this time resolved to seek the revelation of God's commands in the fresh air of the early Palestine morning, by means of divination, or, according to the Chaldean expression, by means of '*meeting the prophetic serpent*.'<sup>3</sup>

The Romans proceeded in such cases in the following manner: 'The augur covered his head, held in his right hand a staff without knots and turned his face eastwards. Then he directed his gaze towards the town and country, prayed to the

<sup>1</sup> See chapter iii. *Balaam*.

<sup>2</sup> These means of divination were absolutely necessary to Balaam in his quality of a heathen seer. The Chaldeans (Lenorm. *Magie*, p. 449) and the Greek diviners (Koehler, p. 25) had equally recourse to divination during sleep and in a state of ecstasy. It is remarkable that magic phenomena have great similarity with those of hypnotism and that mantology or divination is closely related to another form of hypnotism—somnambulism or second-sight.

<sup>3</sup> That Balaam decided this time to learn the Divine will by this means is, according to the general opinion of commentators, evident from the first verse of the twenty-fourth chapter of Numbers: 'He went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments'—in the Hebrew original: נִחְשִׁים לִקְרֹאת, in the Septuagint: εἰς συνάντησιν τοῖς ὀφιοῖς—to meet the prophetic birds. But the translation of the Septuagint interprets the Hebrew original only approximatively. According to the laws of the Hebrew language, נִחְשִׁים (literally serpents) is here used to betoken not the quantity, but the quality, namely, the power (at least from the Chaldean point of view) נִחְשִׁי of the serpent (see Gesenius, B., *Hebrew Grammar*, § 108, 2. 6), which, as a living symbol of the Divinity Ea, was considered by the Chaldeans not only as a prophetic but also powerful creature (Lenorm. *Magie*, pp. 468, 469).

gods, and mentally drew a limit between the east and west (fixed the horizon of his vision), then he drew a straight line in his mind from some object exactly opposite to him, visible on the horizon, a tree for example. Everything that lay to the north of this line was called the left side, and all that was to the south was called the right. After that he prayed to Jupiter, imploring him to condescend to give him within the appointed limits some definite signs which the augur could interpret as an omen.<sup>1</sup> The signification of omens, which expressed the wishes of the Divinity *τέραςιν* (prognostics) was attributed to such phenomena, where a coincidence was to be noticed between the signs proceeding from the Divinity and the material circumstances, which demanded a messenger from heaven, *ἄγγελος Διὸς* 11. ωδ. 296, in consequence of faith in the readiness of the gods to send a message; omens were also drawn from such apparitions, which are, so to say, intermediaries between heaven and earth, such as thunder, lightning, the rainbow, the rapid flight of the eagle. When the Achæans started in their ships to fight against Troy, and Hector blocked their ships, the lightning flashed on the right side, and both signs were considered as omens favourable to the detachment, which was then in the heat of the battle; this favourable sign was called *ἐναλσιμον* or *ἐνδέξιον*. But the signification of the *τέρας* (sign) is sometimes indistinct, and requires an explanation; it is then that the art of mantology appears, and explains the *τέρας* in accordance with certain rules; it is only in extraordinary cases, and with exceptional persons that the sense of an omen can be apprehended in the form of a direct inspiration.<sup>2</sup>

At this time Balaam's frame of mind was not such as to expect with assurance to hear in his heart the mysterious whisper of an invisible spirit (cf. Ezek. xiii. 17); the usual fervour of his invocations of the Divinity was weakened by

<sup>1</sup> Hengstenberg, *Bil.* p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 72-74. Nägelsbach, *H. Theol.* p. 145.

his dissatisfaction at God's incomprehensible favour towards the people 'come out of Egypt'; his spirit was weighed down by the unwelcome presentiment that the Lord's command would be contrary to his wishes. But in order to discern the Divine intentions from the phenomena of the surrounding nature by interrogating them from the point of view of Chaldean mantology, solitude was absolutely necessary to Balaam, so that he might concentrate his thoughts within himself. *'And he (Balak) stood by his burnt sacrifice, and he (Balaam) went to an high place (to question the Lord),'* vers. 6 and 3.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The difference between the Greco-Slavonic and the Russian translations *ИДЕ ПРЯМО* (went straight), and *ПОШЕЛЪ НА ВОЗВЫШЕННОЕ МѢСТО* (went to a high place), proceeds from the difficulty of finding a more appropriate signification of the word *פָּנָה*. The translator of the Vulgate, from a reason incomprehensible to us, interpreted the word *פָּנָה* by 'rapidly.' The Western Biblicists see in the word *פָּנָה* either 'a high place' (Hengstenberg, *Bil.* p. 76), an elevation bare of woods, or according to the example of Onkelos, interpret it by 'solitary,' 'isolated' (Ewald, *Jahrb. der bibl. Wiss.* x. pp. 46, 48), or by the word 'quietly' (De Geer, *Bil.* p. 55). But none of these conceptions corresponds exactly to the sense of *פָּנָה*, and each in particular gives the idea of one-sidedness in the interpretation. Nobody will deny the fact that the word proceeds from *פָּנָה*, 'naked,' 'open' (Ewald, *l.c.*), or from the verb *פָּנָה*, 'to project,' 'to show oneself,' 'to be open,' metaphorically to be open-hearted, frank (Stockii *Clav. L. S.*). We have no data which authorise us to consider *פָּנָה* as an elevation (and yet a bare one), as according to the context the scene takes place on an elevation (xxiii. 9, 'from the top of the rocks'). There is on the contrary very good reason to take the word *פָּנָה* as corresponding by its formation with the little word *קָרָה*, and by its subordinate position (and shortness) serves as the latter, and others (Ewald, *l.c.* § 279), only to determine exactly the manner of going (Ewald, *Jahrb.* x. p. 48). The ancient interpreters, the Septuagint, Onkelos, and the Vulgate give the same explanation; but if even applied as an adverb expressing the mode of action, *פָּנָה* may be understood either in the primitive signification, 'protruding, open, isolated,' or metaphorically 'sincerely, without fraud, convincingly'; but, as every one may observe, this primitive signification of the word *פָּנָה* is not only out of place, but quite superfluous, as the sense is quite distinct without it, and there is no doubt that Balaam went to invoke God, and must have gone *alone*. On the contrary, taken in the metaphorical sense of 'sincere' (not to deceive Balak), this word defines the prophetic deportment

The Lord listened to Balaam's prayer<sup>1</sup> and 'met him' (ver. 4), that is, gave him a sign of His presence, and of His readiness to manifest His will by some sign comprehensible to the Chaldean magian, such as the rustle of leaves, or the particular colour of the clouds. It is difficult to otherwise represent to oneself the meeting of God with Balaam. In fact, the Almighty appeared for the first time even to His faithful servant Moses 'in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush which burned with fire, but was not consumed' (Exod. iii. 2). The intention of this was to divert Moses' attention from the outer material world, and direct it to the region of the inner spiritual world, which indeed happened (ver. 3). When Moses became completely absorbed in this vision, he heard a voice come out of the midst of the bush (ver. 4 and fol.). Afterwards the Lord manifested His presence and His intention of revealing His will before all the people out of the midst of a cloud (Exod. xix. 16; xxiv. 12-16; Num. xvi. 42). God manifested His readiness to help David in the struggle with the Philistines by a sound of a going in the tops of the

of Balaam and his inner impulses at the moment of learning the Divine will; it also shows the reader from what point of view the sacred historian of the Bible regarded the actions of the Mesopotamian prophet. The appropriateness of such an interpretation of the word *יָשַׁע* is corroborated by the important fact that in the Septuagint the word *εὐθείας* is used, which means 'straightly,' that is, 'without deceit, with a deep conviction' (see *εὐθὺς*. Benzeler, *Greco-Russian Dictionary*), 'of the necessity of questioning the Lord.' According to the explanation of the Blessed Theodoretus, *ἡ δὲ πρᾶμο* shows that Balaam really wanted to learn what he had to do, and because of the sincerity of this wish, was found worthy of receiving with his impure lips the power of the All Holy Spirit.' (Blessed Theodoretus, Part I. p. 220, question 42). Therefore, according to the explanation given, instead of *ἡ δὲ πρᾶμο* (went straight), or *пошелъ на возвышенное мѣсто* (went to a high place), should be read, 'he went sincerely, unfeignedly.' It would seem that the interpretation of the Jerusalem Targum in the sense of *יְשַׁע*, with a darkened and grieved heart, is still more appropriate (*Criticor. Sacror. Ann. ad. h. l.* Fagius). In the Syrian text, the word *יָשַׁע* is given in the sense 'sedate' (see De Geer, *Bil.* p. 55).

<sup>1</sup> Such a representation of this meeting of God with the magian is also adopted in the theological literature of the West (see Hengstenberg, *Bil.* p. 77).

mulberry trees (2 Sam. v. 23-25). And if these great prophets could receive God's commands under the condition of a previous revelation of God's Omnipresence by some material phenomenon visible to the physical eye, so much less could the magian Balaam receive the Word of God without the medium of some outward sign. We read in the twelfth chapter of the Book of Numbers, verse 6, that the Lord made Himself known to His prophets in visions, and spoke to them in dreams. As it is said in the narrative, that Balaam was at that moment in a state of wakefulness, the expression, '*and God met Balaam*' (Num. xxiii. 4), signifies 'called him' (as in Exod. iii. 18), or revealed Himself to the Mesopotamian prophet in some apparition visible to the bodily eyes, and thus showed his readiness to disclose what he had previously promised (Num. xxii. 20-35). It was not a revelation in the proper sense of the word, but an indispensable preliminary sign, increasing the assurance that God would deign to reveal Himself. And confidence or a receptive faith is already '*the evidence of things not seen*' (Hebrews xi. 1) in a man's inner world, owing to which one endowed with a prophetic gift becomes capable of 'hearing the words of God' (Num. xxiv. 4). We cannot agree with Vlastov (*Sacred Chronicles*, iii., Num. xxiii. 4, note 6), who identifies 'the meeting of God with Balaam' with inspiration. To do so would be to mix up without sufficient foundation two different actions: a manifestation (מִיָּקָר) and a communication (מִדְּבָר), separated by a third, which is Balaam's prayer to the God Who had appeared to him (ver. 4). It may have been the angel of the Lord who appeared again, as is transmitted in the Samaritan text (see De Geer, *Bil.* p. 56). With an agitated heart Balaam implored the Lord to accept the sacrifice offered, and to show him His favour (ver. 4). But hardly had he had time to think thus, hardly was he distinctly conscious of the intention of inclining the Lord to cast away the Israelites or deprive them, for a time, of His powerful protection, than '*the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth, and*

said: *Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak*' (ver. 5). The Divine inspiration (already partly known to him) came on Balaam. Like the Hebrew King Saul, he became *for a minute* another man. '*God gave him another heart*' (cf. 1 Sam. x. 6, 9, 11). His feeling of hatred for the people 'come out of Egypt' died away, as well as his favour and sympathy for Balak and his subjects. He entered into a passionless condition, and the energy of his indignation against the apparent foes of the Moabites utterly collapsed. The famous Magian of the East was transformed from a soothsayer into a prophet; from a malevolent sorcerer into a messenger of good tidings. A serene feeling of benignancy towards the Israelites flowed like a powerful spring from the depths of Balaam's heart, and quelled the desire of striking the Israelites by the fire of his curse with terror, stupor, and helplessness. Balaam's sensations must have been in a certain degree similar to those of the prophet Jeremiah: '*O Lord, Thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me. . . . Then I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name. But His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay*' (Jer. xx. 7, 9). The light of this irresistible sensation lighted up the usual darkness of Balaam's physical impressions; his spiritual eyes were opened, and he understood, though perhaps dimly, the characteristic spiritual features of the people of Israel, their relations to the God of Truth, and the historical problem which was bound up with this nation. In such a frame of mind, Balaam almost involuntarily returned to Balak, who was standing by his burnt sacrifice with all his princes in a tension of fear and expectation (ver. 6). The respectful and strained attitude of the king, his passionate expectation of hearing from Balaam's lips the curse against the Israelites, acted as still stronger stimulus upon Balaam's mood, completely transformed under the influx of inspiration,



and he fell against his will (Blessed Theodoretus) into that holy, blessed state which ceased to pour itself out in words, and which the Septuagint has interpreted by the expression: '*and the spirit of God was upon him.*'<sup>1</sup> This inspired mood required by its very nature to be expressed in a particular manner. Balaam, as has been already said, was first of all a magian and a soothsayer. Such a calling presupposes peculiar spiritual qualities: an impetuous energy, a capacity of feverish excitement, a rich, ardent imagination, and unusual impressionability. Men, endowed with such a temperament, have the faculty of expressing their thoughts and feelings, on especially important occasions, remarkably vividly and formatively, in figurative and abrupt language, in original typical metaphors, concise and ingenious comparisons and similes. In the present case, before a personality like Balaam's, stood an important mission—that of working a radical change in the aspirations of two nations; other means failing, such a transformation could only be produced through the invisible influence of an irresistible magic suggestion acting upon the feelings and will of the persons subjected to the soothsayer's art. This is the reason why the Magians usually pronounced

<sup>1</sup> It is evident by the translation of the Septuagint of the Hebrew word דָּבַר by ῥῆμα—sentence, command, that this inspiration produced an involuntarily attracting impression upon Balaam. Psychologically speaking, it is similar to the condition of a man seized by a passion of rage, who is unconquerably drawn to show his irritation, notwithstanding the dictates of his reason, and although he foresees that this action will be productive of much evil. 'The impression produced on Balaam by the Divine apparition was so strong, that when he returned to Balak and found him standing with his princes by his burnt offering, he followed the Divine impulse and instantly pronounced his enigmatical speech' (De Geer, *Bil.* p. 56). It is certain that he spoke in a semi-conscious state, 'not knowing what he said'; for, according to the words of the Apostle Peter, '*no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation*' (2 Peter i. 20). That is to say (according to the opinion of the English theologian Farrar), the prophets said more than they themselves could explain; for if the speech of a prophet is not his own, the interpretation of him who pronounces the speech cannot be proportionate to the sense. This is evidently suggested by the Apostle Peter, 1 Peter i. 10-12. (Farrar, *The Early Days of Christianity*, Russian translation, Book ii. n. 334, p. 845.)

their exorcisms and curses in harmonious singing speech, in terms as far as possible ingenious and concise, both lively and picturesque. For the same reason, in the Latin language, the exorcisms and prophecies usually bear the name of '*Carmen*,' 'enchanting song.'<sup>1</sup> The whole literature of exorcisms and curses which has remained of the first typical Chaldean Magians and soothsayers leads us to the idea that the Mesopotamian sorcerers clothed their blessings and curses in the same form. Therefore Balaam, as a true magian, poured out the Divine inspiration which had come to him in the powerful, picturesque, and harmonious form habitual to him, namely, in that of a parable in verse, or of a prophetic song.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lenorm. *Magie*, p. 72. The Grecian oracles and diviners had the same characteristics (Koehler, *Prophetismus*, p. 36).

<sup>2</sup> By the generally accepted interpretation of the Hebrew word מְשָׁל, Greek παραβολή, a parable means, according to the radical signification of the verb מָשַׁל, to equalise, to govern, to dominate (Stockii *Clav.*, Fürst and Steinh.), a powerful speech or poem which impresses all (by the richness of its edifying thoughts and beauty of form). According to the opinion of our esteemed countryman, I. S. Iakimow, the word מְשָׁל signifies 'a statement exposed principally in images (comparisons) and in an artistic form' (*Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah*, xiv. 3-6). The well-known Professor A. Olesnitzky affirms, 'that under a parable must be understood in general every authoritative judgment (the fundamental signification of the root מָשַׁל is *imperavit, dominatus est*), be it a national proverb or the sentence of some authoritative individual, and quite independently of the poetical form which may be or not in the parable' (*Book of the Proverbs of Solomon and its Modern Critics*, p. 18). According to the interpretation of St. Basil the Great, a parable is a useful speech, worded with fitting reserve, and not only containing useful information at first sight, but possessing also in its depths a vast amount of thought (*Works of St. Basil the Great*, iv. 194). Applied to Balaam's blessings, the parable expresses an inspired enigmatic speech with a concealed mysterious signification (such as mentioned in Job xxvii. 1, xxix. 1; Ps. xlix. 4; Ezek. xvii. 2). That a parable means an instructive and enigmatical speech is also apparent from the fact that in Ps. xlix. 4 and Ezek. xvii. 2, the word parable is used in parallel with the word riddle, הֵיחָד, (from הָדַךְ, to be sharp, witty; Septuagint, *προβλήμα*, which, properly speaking, means an original thought concealed under a form which is not easy of access (sharp) (cf. Judges xiv. 2). The substance of Balaam's parables is a prophetic and poetical representation of the destiny and importance of the Israelites in the present and future. By their form

## BALAAM'S FIRST PARABLE

(Numbers xxiii. 7-10)

§ 3, ver. 7. *And he took up his parable and said,  
Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram,  
out of the mountains of the East,<sup>1</sup> saying,  
Come, curse me Jacob,  
and come, defy Israel.*

they represent a poem consisting of several inspired hymns; but as the destiny of Israel is represented from the point of view of its outward worldly importance, the inner sense of these parables contains the prophecies of the absolute happiness and power of the spiritual Israel, and the destruction of its foes. These prophecies have a double meaning: in the conditional sense, their fulfilment consists in earthly glory, grandeur, and riches; unconditionally, in freedom from sin and perfect joy in heaven. Therefore there is no doubt that Balaam himself did not fully understand the importance of his prophetic words, nor realise the mysterious signification of his prophecies, for even the holy prophets themselves could not, whilst living in this world, fully understand the great signification of their prophecies (cf. 1 Peter i. 10-12). Balaam's parables are distinguished from the prophetic speeches of the Israelite prophets both by their name itself and by their concise poetical form, and a certain objectiveness in the tone. The different points which distinguish Balaam from the prophets spring from a common source, from the circumstance that Balaam had only the 'donum' (gift), and not the 'munus propheticum' (the prophetic service); that he did not live amidst any religious community (church), and was not animated by the desire of exerting an influence over its members (compare the origin of the difference between prophetic diction and poetic, through the connection of the prophets with the Church, Ewald, *Prophet.* pp. 46-50). It is observable in all Balaam's speeches that his spiritual eye is only directed to the objects which he sees, and he does not pay the least attention to the impression he may produce on his auditor. This is quite natural in Balaam's case; he did not belong to the community of the Lord: *Cessante causa, cessat effectus* (Hengstenberg, *Bil.* pp. 78, 79). Balaam pronounced his speech in a loud voice, for the Hebrew word נִשָּׂא, proceeding from נָשָׂא, means to raise the voice.

<sup>1</sup> According to the signification of the parable, under the word 'Mesopotamia'\* (Hebrew אֲרָם, Gen. xxviii. 2, 6, 7; אֲרָם, Septuagint, Μεσοποταμία, Deut. xxiii. 4; אֲרָם נַחֲרִים, according to the translation of the Vulgate, Onkelos, Arab., Syriac, and according to Deut. xxiii. 5, the river Aram, Northern Syria, near Tipsak and Circesium, between Balis and Hovar) and its parallel expression הָרְרֵי קָרְם, we have to conceive, not the locality itself (the plain) inhabited by Balaam, but the characteristic

\* In the English text the word 'Aram' is used, in the Russian that of 'Mesopotamia' (Translator).

Ver. 8. *How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?  
or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?*<sup>1</sup>

Ver. 9. *For from the top of the rocks I see him,  
and from the hills I behold him :  
lo, the people shall dwell alone,  
and shall not be reckoned among the nations.*<sup>2</sup>

feature of his native country, the land where the art of magic and of sorcery had reached its highest degree of development. It was owing to the fame of Chaldean magic that Balak turned to Mesopotamia with the appeal to Balaam to use his incantations in order to deprive the sons of Jacob of the Divine protection, to overwhelm them with misfortunes, and consume them with the fire of a terrible wrath. The correctness of such an interpretation is confirmed by the fact that in Aram there are no mountains remarkable for their height. It has become known in latter years that the Chaldean magians found it more possible and easy to be inspired, and prophesy, from the summit of high towers, which bore the technical name of 'mountains of the East.' Every Chaldean town had one or several watch-towers, which were used for the observation of stars and other atmospherical phenomena. In Chaldea and Babylonia the watch-tower served at the same time as a temple similar to the frequently mentioned 'Xarsak Kurra,' 'mountain of the East,' or 'mountain of the lands' (Assyrian *sadu matati*), which was revered as the residence of the gods and the cradle of humanity, or looked upon as a support for the sky. Such a tower was always built in the form of a pyramid, with projections, Zikurat, or Ziggurat, literally 'coniform mountain' (Lenorm. *Magic*, p. 440, cf. with p. 403).

<sup>1</sup> In the first part of the seventh verse, instead of 'curse,' the Hebrew word אָרָה (from אָרַר) should be interpreted, according to the Arabian text, 'burn with a tormenting restlessness, in order that he should come to an evil end'; and in the second part, instead of the word 'speak evil,' אָמַרָה, from אָמַר, to boil with rage, to throw out foam, the interpretation should be, 'breathe the fire of wrath' (De Geer, *Bil.* p. 61, and Steinberg, *Hebrew-Russian Dictionary*). In accordance with the Hebrew original, the word אָקַב (from אָקַב) should have been transmitted: 'As I will strike' (with a spell). See De Geer, *Bil.* p. 33, note 118.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the expressions of the Greco-Slavonic translation of the eighth and ninth verses do not exactly render the idea of the original. The Hebrew word מַה, with which the eighth verse begins, means generally 'what' (what), as in the Greco-Slavonic text, but it occasionally means 'how?' 'in what manner?' 'by what means or forces?' It is certainly used in this sense in the verse quoted. It is thus translated in the Vulgate, and in the Arabic and Syriac translations in Walton's *Polyglotta*. The Russian translators of the Synod also found the word КАКЪ (how) more appropriate. It is also not quite appropriate to translate the first word of the

Ver. 10. 'Who can count the dust of Jacob,  
and the number of the fourth part of Israel?  
Let me die the death of the righteous,  
and let my last end be like his!'<sup>1</sup>

ninth verse of the Hebrew text 'ב by the usual *στι* ἄλλω (as). The causal signification of 'ב in the passage quoted is so indistinct, that it has been either left out in both the Russian edition of the Synod and the Vulgate, or translated in the Vienna text (ed. Reich. 1877) as the particle *БOTH* (there). But it is never used in this sense. As a conjunction, 'ב is used in the conditional, concessive, and opposing significations (*Stockii Clav.*). The fittest term here would be 'but' in the sense of an antithesis, or, 'on the contrary,' to express the passage from one thought to another (*Gesenius, Hebrew Grammar*, p. 586), which is penetrated with an intense feeling of melancholy astonishment. The fitness of such an interpretation is highly probable, as the Septuagint has more than once translated the conjunction 'ב by the Greek conjunction ἀλλά (but), Latin 'at.' Finally the ninth and tenth verses actually express neither a curse nor an evil wish, nor a prayer for the destruction of the Israelites, but a blessing, a prediction to the (spiritual) descendants of Israel of a glorious future, differing from that of other nations. The verbs of the ninth verse being used in the future tense in the Greco-Slavonic translation, do not correspond with the verbal forms of the original. In Hebrew we read אֶרְאֶה (from רָאָה, to see), אֶשְׁכַּח (from שָׁכַח, to contemplate, to foresee), אֶחְיֶה (from חָיָה, to live), אֶתְּשֶׁבֶעַ (from שָׁבַע, to count, to appreciate). The verbs in the form of the imperfect past form always express in Hebrew an action which begins, which is taking place, or will take place (*Gesen. Hebr. Gram.* § 127, p. 484); they express 'an action which is not yet completed, but which continues as well in the past as in the present' (*Ibid.* § 47, p. 166). This is the signification which seems alone appropriate in this case, and therefore has been adopted in the Russian translation of the Bible.

<sup>1</sup> The generally adopted reading of the tenth verse is questionable in some of its expressions, and neither the ancient nor modern interpreters have thoroughly entered into the sense of some words. The Greco-Slavonic ἐξεκρίβασατο *ИЗСЛѢДИТЬ*, to 'investigate,' to 'represent accurately' (cf. *Benzel. and Grazin. Greco-Russian Dictionary*) corresponds better to the Hebrew word מִנָּה than the Russian word *ИСЧИСЛИТЬ* (to count); the word מִנָּה is only used in this special signification by modern writers. In the Pentateuch the meaning of 'to count' is usually expressed by the word סָפַר (*Hengstenb. Bil.* pp. 92, 93). The word עָפַר, used as a complement to מִנָּה, literally means dust, fine sand, earth, soil. Several translations, such as the Vulgate, the Russian (also Onkelos and the Samaritan text), have adopted the word עָפַר in its fundamental signification on account of the

In these few lines, Balaam, like a clever painter, has drawn in a few bold strokes a vivid picture of the general position of

poetical form of the narrative; but as this word is taken in some parallel passages of the Bible (Gen. xiii. 16 xxviii. 14) as an image of the numerous descendants of Abraham, and as in the given passage the numerous descendants of Jacob are equally in view, it would be more appropriate to use the word עַפְרָה metonymically, and to say 'posterity' (seed, זֶרַע), as in the Septuagint. In the following line there is a difference between the Greco-Slavonic and Russian translations, undoubtedly proceeding from the fact that different manuscripts were used for the Septuagint and the Massoreth texts: וּמִסְפָּר אֲתִירֵבֶּעַ. Literally this expression means: 'and by the number,' or 'according to the number,' or 'the number of the fourth part,' as in the Russian translation. Here the subject and the predicate of the first line, 'who will investigate?' will have the same signification in the second line, and אֲתִירֵבֶּעַ is to be regarded as the complement of 'to investigate by means of the questions how?' 'by the number?' (Hengstenb. *Bil.* pp. 92, 93). But some observation and an acquaintance with the Hebrew language will show us that such a reading sounds unnatural and inappropriate. The word רֵבֶּעַ is read as רֵבֶּעַ, roba, and רֵבֶּעַ, reba. According to the opinion of the latest interpreters this word means a quarter, a fourth part. In the ancient texts, the Arabic, Vulgate, and Samaritan, the word רֵבֶּעַ is translated as 'posterity.' But none of these interpretations can be considered satisfactory. The first trespasses against the law of parallelism, which forms an essential feature of the prophetic parable in the passage quoted; the second does not show any new side of the question; therefore the parallelism becomes useless. This is the cause why doubts have been long ago raised as to the authenticity of the word רֵבֶּעַ, so that in several codices of the Massoreth and Samaritan texts it is replaced by the word מֵרֵבֶּעַ or מֵרֵבֹות, multitude (2 Chron. ix. 6). However, this reading is less appropriate than that of the Septuagint, where the word is translated by γενεαι, 'generations,' 'families' (Num. xxvi. 7-57), or רֵבֹות (from רֵבֹוא) (Dan. xi. 12; Neh. vii. 17; Ps. lxxviii. 17), 'ten thousands,' 'multitudes.' This term, used as a 'synecdoche' when a certain number is taken to denote an indefinite multitude (cf. Ps. lxxviii. 17; Dan. xi. 12), seems to be exactly appropriate to the passage quoted, as it is a usual form of Aramaic blessings (cf. Gen. xxiv. 60: 'Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions' רֵבֹות). In Num. x. 36, instead of 'people' or 'descendants of Israel,' are used 'many thousands of Israel.' רֵבֹות אֶלְפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל is also used. Besides this, the expression וּמִסְפָּר, 'by the number,' is undoubtedly a mutilation of סָפַר, 'and who will count.' Indeed, as much as the expression וּמִסְפָּר is obscure, inappropriate to the sense of the context, nor warranted by any analogy, so is סָפַר fully appropriate and comprehensible. Both the sense and the construction of the phrase justify the latter interpretation.

the matter which had called him to the land of Moab: he has been brought from distant Mesopotamia, from the land of the sacred prophetic mountains,<sup>1</sup> at the appeal of the Moabite king, to deprive the sons of the patriarch Jacob of the Divine protection, to blast the descendants of Israel with the withering fire of his wrath. But has he the power of crushing this people when their Divine Protector and Master will not allow it? And how can he burn them with the deadly fire of his

It exists in some editions of the Samaritan codex, and is undoubtedly presupposed in the Arabic and in the Vulgate, as also in the unedited version of the Samaritan-Arabic Pentateuch. The third line of the tenth verse, 'Let me die the death of the righteous' was also read and written differently in the ancient manuscripts of the Hebrew original. The probable reading of the Septuagint was תָּמוּת נַפְשִׁי בְּנַפְשׁוֹת יְשָׁרִים, whilst in the Massoreth text which has reached us is written, instead of בְּנַפְשׁוֹת, 'in the souls,' נַפְשִׁי מוֹת, 'my soul by death.' The reading of the Septuagint seems less probable. The generally adopted Massoreth reading expressed in the Russian translation represents the death of the righteous (that is of the Israelites) as to be envied and desired. The reading of the Septuagint represents the prophet's desire of sharing life and death with this happy people, a feeling which does not correspond with the history of Balaam's relations towards the Israelites. The last line of this verse in the Slavonic text, И БДИ СѢМА МОЕ, ꙗкоже сѣма ѥхъ (and may my seed be like their seed), seems the most suitable translation according to the context. The generally adopted Hebrew expression corresponding to this, וְתָהִי אֶחְרִיתִי כְּמֹהוּ (בְּמֹהוּ), is undoubtedly authentic. But the word אֶחְרִית has several significations which vary when it is used in the literal or metaphorical sense. Generally this word means the future time, the future, the end of life; metonymically, it expresses posterity, seed. But as the prophetic parallelism usually treats a question or an event from different sides, and throws a new light upon it, in the present case the word אֶחְרִית must not be taken in the sense of 'the end of life' (as De Geer, *Bibl.* p. 66), a conception which has already been given in the preceding line of the verse, but should be understood in the sense of 'seed,' 'posterity.' Therefore, properly speaking, the tenth verse translated from the original Hebrew into Slavonic should be read as follows: Кто изслѣдитъ сѣма іаковле; и кто изочтѣтъ тѣмы ііла; да оумретъ ꙗкоша моѧ смѣртью прѣведныхъ. и бди сѣма моѧ, ꙗкоже сѣма ѥхъ. (Who can investigate the seed of Jacob, and who can count the multitudes of Israel? May my soul die the death of the righteous, and may my seed be like their seed!)

<sup>1</sup> The signification of 'mountains of the East' has been explained on p. 175, note 1.

wrath when the Lord is not angry with them, and He is the only Omnipotent Ordainer of human destinies, the Giver of life and happiness, the Chastiser of every transgression and unrighteousness?<sup>1</sup> No, it cannot be! Here, from the summit of the holy mountain, where breathes the righteousness of God, with the keen eye of the seer he perceives Israel's place in the universe, the innumerable multitudes of the people, and the inward spiritual cause from which their prosperity springs. In order to preserve the purity of their religion, they do not mingle with other nations such as the Moabites and Midianites; they neither require their assistance, nor do they take part in their life, in their pleasures, and aspirations. They follow their own laws and customs, and dwell in a state of quiet and guarded exclusiveness.<sup>2</sup> Engrossed in their own affairs, this

<sup>1</sup> Balak's conviction (Num. xxii. 6) that all human happiness and misfortunes depended solely on the soothsayer's magic will, explains the signification of Balaam's prophetic speeches; in opposition to the king's superstitious convictions, he gives a true insight into his position, and declares that the power of his beneficial and chastising will is not unlimited and unconditional, but depends entirely on the decrees of Jehovah, as He is the absolute Lord of blessings and curses, health and sickness; for His servants, amongst whom Balaam ranks himself, have only the power of proclaiming His decrees, and not that of determining or changing them. It is evident that Balak did not realise the existence of God's immutable and independent decrees, and probably thought that the Mesopotamian soothsayer could use the Divine power at will, so that once Balaam's energetic will had been brought to the point of uttering the curse, its evil effects would be forthcoming of themselves (cf. Hengstenb. *Bil.* pp. 82, 83). Such superstition in Balak must have been borrowed from the Egyptians (Lenormant, *Magie*, pp. 101, 102). The Dorpat theologian Kurtz treats this question in detail in his *Geschichte des Alt. Bundes*, ii. 474, 475.

<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew word  $\text{נִדָּח}$ , in the Septuagint  $\mu\upsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$ , 'one,' in this case signifies, according to the context, 'separate' (Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*). The celebrated German theologian Ewald (*Jahrb.* i. 1. 25) also understands this expression in the sense of religious exclusiveness. Outward isolation is the emblem of inward spiritual individuality and separation from the heathen world, owing to which the Israelites not only do not share the fate of the heathen world, but cannot fall under its dominion; naturally, only as long as they themselves keep their individuality from contact with the heathens, as long as they dwell in close union with the Lord their God, Who has separated them for Himself from amongst other nations. On the contrary, as soon as Israel fell into idolatry, it lost its outward independence. This refers



people does not seem to exist for the rest of the world; therefore its lot is one apart from all other nations. The wall of the Divine protection separates it from the rest of the world and exempts it from the great catastrophes which change the face of the earth. It is a supremely happy nation, a blessed people. The feature of the chosen people's moral exclusiveness has been later particularly well defined by the prophet Moses in Deut. iv. 6, 8: *'Keep therefore and do them (the laws and commandments): for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. . . . And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?'* The idea of this exceptional happiness allotted to the descendants of Jacob is still more clearly expressed in Deut. xxxiii. 28, 29: *'Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.'* It could not be otherwise, for its numbers surpass every other nation. In truth, it is

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indiscriminately to the Israel of the Old and New Testaments, to the community or Church of God throughout all times (see Keil's comment *in loco*). That the theocratic government was the cause which isolated Israel from other nations has already been suggested by Cokcius (see Hengstenb. *Bil.* pp. 86, 87).

The Slavonic И СО МЗЫКИ НЕ ВМѢНАТСА (and with the nations shall not be reckoned) would have been more correctly transmitted in accordance with the Greek by saying: И ВО МЗЫЦѢХА НЕ ВМѢНІТСА (and amongst the nations will not be reckoned), to express the moral worth according to the exact signification of the Hebrew word מִשְׁתַּחֲוִי; to 'enumerate the qualities of an object,' the passive form of 'to evaluate.'

impossible to count the great numbers of the descendants of Jacob or the myriads of the righteous sons of Israel. What a longing must have filled the heart of the famous magian to die the peaceful death of these happy, righteous men, in a good old age, after a long and prosperous life.<sup>1</sup> How ardently he must have desired that his posterity should live happily and righteously as these descendants of Israel!

## BALAAM'S SECOND PARABLE

(Numbers xxiii. 11-24)

§ 4. The king of Moab was not in a condition to listen longer to a speech in which he heard the confirmation of the power, so formidable to the Moabites, with which the people 'come

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<sup>1</sup> The expression מְרִיץ, instead of the usual מְרִיץ (Gen. xviii. 28), shows the Aramaic origin of Balaam, and may signify righteous, good, and blessed, happy (in Assyrian ܡܪܝܩ, see Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften*, p. 537, and De Geer, *Bil.* p. 66). Besides that, it is absolutely necessary to determine in what sense Balaam desired to die the same death as the Israelites, whether he had in view a blissful life beyond the grave, or only a peaceful, happy, timely end amid the full accomplishment of his hopes and aspirations. 'The greater part of ancient commentators,' says Hengstenberg, 'found in this passage a suggestion of the glorious immortality which awaited the members of the Lord's community. . . . J. D. Michaelis was also of the same opinion; but this is doubtful for many reasons: the parables of Balaam everywhere referred exclusively to the temporal life as Balak's curse required, and to which the blessing forms the antithesis; it had no relation to the future bliss of Israel, but solely concerned the present life; in the Pentateuch, life beyond the grave remains in the shade for reasons which are explained in the third part of the *Beiträge*, p. 577, and a definite reference to the bliss of the righteous after death is nowhere to be found in this part of the Bible, therefore life beyond the grave can only have been mentioned there where no other life could have been thought of.' Evidently this is not so in the present case. Balaam may have wished to die the death of the righteous in other respects. We may be persuaded of this by comparing Balaam's death, punished by the vengeful sword of the Israelites (Num. xxxi. 8), with the death of Abraham, to whom God gave the promise (Gen. xv. 15): '*And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.*' Abraham's death is described thus in Gen. xxv. 8: '*Then Abraham gave up the ghost and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people.*' There were three characteristic features that made the death of the righteous enviable and desirable: (1) Their death was happy in relation to the

out of Egypt' was endowed by God. It was too unexpected and displeasing to him, and he abruptly cut short the flow of sacred inspiration and said to Balaam: '*What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and behold thou hast blessed them altogether*' (ver. 11). Balaam calmly answered this reproach by indicating the true cause of the fact that was so displeasing to the king: 'that he must heed that which the Lord put in his mouth' (ver. 12). It would seem that the Moabite king's superstitious awe of Balaam's magic power was so great, that instead of being angered at such an answer, he said to Balaam with surprising patience and condescension: '*Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them: thou shalt see but the utmost part of them,*

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present, past, and future. They died in the enjoyment of God's mercy and in the consciousness of His love. (2) To look back on the past filled them with satisfaction; at every turn of their life they saw continual traces of God's mercy, manifested in blessings, grace, salvation, healing, prayers constantly fulfilled, protection from foes, a life passed amid dangers bountifully averted until the goal was reached, and life was not violently cut off, but quietly extinguished. Steidel thus expresses this idea: 'Balaam wishes at the close of his days to have the possibility of looking on his past with the same feeling of satisfaction as his citizens.' (3) The elect died with joy in the luminous foresight of the future in store for their race and people; the importance of such a moment is shown by the blessing of Jacob to his sons in the last hours of his life, the blessing of Moses pronounced upon the tribes of Israel shortly before his death. In those times, the more every separate person lived a common and not individual life, seeing in his posterity the continuation of his own existence, the more the heart of the dying man must have rejoiced at the happy future pledged to them by the Divine promises, and the bitterness of death was taken away by this belief. The dying Jacob expresses this conviction by the words: '*I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!*' (Gen. xlix. 18.) 'They are the best confirmation of the above,' says Hengstenberg (*Bil.* pp. 95, 96). The departure of the righteous is represented oftener as agreeable and seldom as bitter (cf. Ezek. vii. 2; Prov. v. 11; Gen. xv. 15, xxv. 8; Deut. xxxiv. 5). The death of the righteous full of days (Gen. xxv. 8, xxxv. 29; 1 Chron. xxix. 28) is represented as the happy close of a career blessed by God. Balaam desires such an end, perhaps with a secret presentiment of his own inglorious violent end. Israel appears to him collectively as a nation of righteous men (a fate to which this people had been predestined), amongst whom each person faithful to his God and to his king had the right of anticipating a blessed and peaceful death as a desirable rest after labour (Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, fourth note to the Book of Numbers).

*and shalt not see them all : and curse me them from thence* (ver. 13). This second endeavour to induce the Mesopotamian soothsayer to curse the hated Israelites may be explained by the superstitious belief of the ancient heathen nations, that the Divinity could manifest His mercy or His wrath to mankind only in certain appointed places pleasing to Him. According to the faith of the Greeks, the Deity revealed itself on Olympus and Parnassus, according to that of the Assyrians on the mountains of the East, and according to that of the nations of Palestine on various local high places; from thence proceeded the popular belief that some heights were more or less favoured by the gods, and it led to the superstition, that if a prayer was not fulfilled in one place, this did not exclude the possibility of a more favourable issue in another. This was apparently Balak's reasoning in the present case, and he perhaps even attributed his failure to the place which had been chosen, and which might not have been pleasing to God; he therefore trusted that fresh sacrifices and prayers in a fresh place might propitiate the Deity and give Balaam the power to pronounce his curse 'against the hated and dangerous strangers come out from Egypt.' The heathens had no conception of the immutability of the Divine will,<sup>1</sup> and therefore Balak naturally might think that God desired greater sacrifices as redoubled signs of submission and fervour. Besides this, in accordance with the generally adopted belief in Mesopotamia (which has a real psychological foundation), that the malignant power of the magian's word could only become fatal to the object of the curse, in the case when the latter were uttered in close proximity to its object and on the same horizon of vision, the king of Moab might have supposed that the first exorcism had failed because the distance of the Israelites' camp from the heights of Baal was too considerable, and therefore its outlines must have appeared dim and indistinct, and only part of the

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<sup>1</sup> Hartung; Hengstenberg, *Bil.* p. 103.

camp could have been visible.<sup>1</sup> However this might have been, whether for this reason or others, Balak proposed to Balaam to go and curse the Israelites from another height, which was nearer to their camp, and from whence, if not all, at least the greater part of it, was clearly visible.<sup>2</sup> Balaam

<sup>1</sup> We find this explanation in Hengstenberg, p. 102. On the other hand, other more ancient commentators, such as Origen, Theodoretus, and some modern ones, for instance De Geer (*Dissert. de Bil.* p. 58), are of a different opinion: they suppose that Balak suspected that Balaam did not pronounce the curse because he was overwhelmed and troubled at the sight of the Israelites' armed camp, and felt the insufficiency of his magic power. In order to encourage Balaam, so that he should have the force to wither the Israelites by his curse, the king took him over to another place from which he could only see a part of the Israelites' camp, and from where he would not be so overwhelmed by the impression which would be experienced from the heights of Baal. These conjectures, however, have no reliable foundation, because, as has already been said, only a part, and not the *whole* camp, was visible from the heights of Baal (Num. xxii. 41).

<sup>2</sup> Hengstenberg gives a good explanation of the 13th verse, chap. xxiii.: 'Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them (the Israelites' tents); thou shalt see but the utmost part of them and shalt not see them all,' which he places in parallel with verse 41 of chap. xxii.: 'and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost part of the people.' 'It is evident,' says Hengstenberg, 'that the passages refer to different places, particularly if they are compared with the second verse of chap. xxiv., which indicates a third place: "And he saw Israel abiding in his tents, according to their tribes." It is true that it is difficult to seize this difference at first sight, and it rather appears that from both places only "the utmost part" is equally seen in contrast to the whole; thus several commentators, such as Marcus, De Geer, and others, tried to define the difference by making for example a periphrase of verse 41, chap. xxii. "Thence he saw the utmost part of the people," and adding, "From one end to its other extreme end." But this is contradicted by the commented passage itself. If the sight of the "utmost end" is mentioned here in contrast to the sight of the whole, it is impossible to suppose that the same author used the expression "utmost end" in another passage in an opposite sense. Neither does the topography of the place coincide with this opinion: it is impossible to see the whole Israelite camp from the heights of Bamoth-Baal (cf. the passage about the fourth part of Israel in Balaam's prophecy, chap. xxiii. ver. 10). Other commentators have tried to explain the words, "Thou shalt see only the utmost part of them," by the periphrase, "Thou hast only seen until now the utmost end (from Bamoth-Baal) and hast not yet seen the whole." This explanation does not agree with the text, which is in the future tense (although that might be taken as the present, as they had not yet left the first place); but what renders it particularly inappropriate is the analogy of the preceding word תראנו

consented to the proposal of the powerful chief of the Moabites, and the imposing caravan with the king and the famous magian at its head moved on with all necessary military precautions from the heights of Baal, in the north-western direction, and after a few hours' rapid march reached 'the field of sentries' (English text, 'the field of Zophim') and the top of Pisgah<sup>1</sup> (ver. 14). This mountain, and

and the want of the word 'now.' Further, the omission of כִּי before the word בָּדֹן which is directly joined to the sentence, "Whence thou shalt see them," clearly expresses its limitation. Finally, if Balaam had already seen the whole people from Bamoth-Baal, Balak would have had no reason to take him to another place, the more so that by its situation it was impossible to see the whole camp from the top of Pisgah. Therefore nothing remains but to take in the second case the word "part" in a broader sense than in the first, a conclusion to which we are led by a close examination of the expressions used in both passages. In verse 41 of chap. xxii. he saw "the utmost part of the people," and in verse 10 of chap. xxiii. he saw "the people, but not all, only the utmost part of them," therefore part of the people, which conveys the idea of limitation; the very fact that the people is mentioned first, suggests that the "utmost end" of the camp could not have been meant in this case. The topography of both places also agrees with this interpretation. From the distant heights of Bamoth-Baal, Balaam could only have seen the utmost end of the camp indistinctly, as if enveloped in a mist; from Mount Pisgah the horizon must have been much wider, but it is only from the top of Peor, which rises just over the valley of the Jordan, that Balaam could have had a full view of the Israelite camp' (Hengstenberg, *Bil.* pp. 104, 105.) 'From the heights of Bamoth-Baal, the Israelite camp could have been visible to Balaam only as an indistinct line nearly disappearing in the distance, now (from Mount Pisgah) he sees a part of the people more *distinctly*, although some are concealed from his sight by intermediate objects' (Oort, *Dissert.* xxii-xxiv., p. 18.) It is as well to notice that by the word 'but' Balak desired to express a regret that also from this new point Balaam would not see all the people of Israel.

<sup>1</sup> There is a difference between the names of these places in the Greco-Slavonic and Russian texts, which probably proceeds from the inaccurate ideas of the translators about the situation of these places, which are rarely mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. The generally adopted reading (according to the Vatican codex) of the Septuagint is: *ἐς ἀγρου σκοπῖαν κορυφὴν λελαξευμένον*, but in the original manuscript of the Septuagint it may have been *ἐς ἀγρου σκοπίας* 'on the field of sentries'. The remaining difference may have also proceeded from the indistinct writing of the Hebrew consonants, so that the Septuagint instead of reading the usually adopted sentence שָׂרָה צִפִּים שָׂרָה צִפִּים, read it שָׂרָה מִצְפָּה אֶל רֹאשׁ הַפְּסִיל, on the field of sentries at the top of the hewed (stone). In ancient times pickets of several soldiers were placed as sentries on the top of the hills which served as watch-towers,

particularly its summit (perhaps the well-known Mount Nebo), was much nearer to the place where the Israelites pitched their camp near the plain of Moab.<sup>1</sup> It rose at a considerable height above all the neighbouring hills and it was only the mountain of Peor which concealed a considerable part of the Israelite tents from the view. From here Balaam had a much more distinct view of the

and it was their duty to inform the inhabitants of the lowlands of the approach of the enemy by the means of certain signals, such as the burning of straw or hay. The smoke and fire which suddenly appeared at the summit of these hills were signs for the peaceful inhabitants to take refuge in flight. (See Rosenmüller, *Scholia*.)

<sup>1</sup> It seems that Balak and Balaam reached the second place chosen for the curse by following the same way by which the tribes of Israel had journeyed some time before: '*from Bamoth in the valley, that is in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah, which looketh toward Jeshimon*' (Num. xxi. 20). The situation of the field or plain of the sentries on the top of Pisgah, whence Balak for the second time wished to induce Balaam to pronounce the curse, is generally determined as follows: 'The field of the sentries at the top of Pisgah evidently corresponds to the valley of Gayu situated in the country of Moab on the top of Pisgah, facing the desert, which is mentioned in Numbers xxi. 20 as the last station of the Israelites before reaching the plains of Moab; it corresponds also to the Israelites' station "on the mountains of Abarim before Nebo," which in Num. xxxiii. 47 is mentioned as the last station before the plains of Moab; Mount Nebo, Deuteronomy xxxiv. 1, is indicated as a separate part of Mount Pisgah, and as its highest summit, forming a separate part of the mountains of Abarim: "And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho"' (see Kurtz, *Geschichte des Alt. Bund.* ii. p. 453). The commentators who wished for a more exact definition of the situation of Mount Nebo, in the neighbourhood of which lay 'the field of sentries,' suppose that it must be sought for between the Jordan near Jericho and Jeshimon, at about an hour's march to the west of this town. It is difficult to exactly determine the situation, because no modern travellers have ever made the journey from Jericho to Jeshimon; however, it is certain that the locality just mentioned corresponds to the description of Mount Nebo in the Holy Scriptures. The neighbourhood of Jeshimon had a vaster horizon than any other part of the country occupied by the Israelites in the times of Moses. Buckingham says in his travelling notes upon Syria and Palestine (German trans., ii. pp. 106, 107): 'The town of Huzvan is situated at such an elevation that it commands a view of at least thirty miles' length on all sides; to the south the view extends to a distance of even sixty miles, and commands a wide and beautiful expanse of country; to the west is a deep valley, and a little farther the valley of the Jordan at a distance of about six to ten miles. From this point straight to the west Jerusalem can be discerned and Bethlehem seen even more distinctly; the

camp (Deut. iii. 27) than from the heights of Baal, and the spot was one particularly calculated to inspire elevated thoughts: 'to the east the great desert extends as far as the Euphrates; the beautiful mountains of Edom are visible to the south; the rocks of the Engedi, the future dwelling of the Kenites, rise beyond the Dead Sea; the southern desert extends behind the dwelling-place of the Amalekites, the first enemies of the Israelites; below, on "the field of acacias," on the rich plain of the eastern valley of the Jordan (which completely differs from the cultivated fields of the elevated plain) was pitched the vast camp of the Israelites, and farther to the west, beyond the hills of Palestine, lies, as was well known to Balaam, the great sea, out of the depths of which rose the Isles of Hittim, and the waters of which bathed the lands of the future.'<sup>1</sup>

Balaam and his companions ascended this height with heavy hearts. The king and his princes were angered at Balaam's craftiness, and were divided between hopes of his assistance and fear of the impending danger. The Mesopotamian magian was grieved at their displeasure, the danger of the Moabites excited his compassion, but, foreseeing the destruction of the hopes placed in him, he had passed from a condition of murmuring against Jehovah and total despondency to a state of unwilling and apathetic submission to an

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western side of the Dead Sea is also visible at a distance of nearly fifteen miles to the south-west; the view to the south and to the east is unlimited' (Hengstenb. *Bibl.* pp. 243-248). Thus 'the field of sentries' was situated on the mountains of Abarim on one of the heights of Pisgah, and on one of the tops of Pisgah, near the highest summit, is Mount Nebo near Jericho, between the Jordan and the town of Jeshimon, at an hour's march from the latter. The indefinite name of 'field of sentries' is used as a proper name evidently because the sacred historian Moses had in view the place known to the people led by him, where shortly before that, during a station before Mount Nebo in the mountains of Abarim, the Israelites had their cattle grazing under the care of some sentries, or in general, had a watch-post there to observe the movements of the Amorites and other neighbouring tribes (Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, xxiii. 11-17, note 5).

<sup>1</sup> See Lapoukhine, A. P., *Bibl. History*, i. 716, 717.



omnipotent will. Here, therefore, '*Balak built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar*' (ver. 14). When, therefore, the appeal to the Divine mercy had been made once more, Balaam ordered Balak to stand by the burnt offering, whilst he retired for a few minutes at some distance '*to meet the Lord yonder.*'<sup>1</sup> Jehovah heard Balaam's prayer, and '*met him*': that is to say, He manifested His presence by some sign, or word in his mouth, and said: '*Go again unto Balak, and say thus*' (ver. 16). The Mesopotamian magian was thrilled in his whole being by this new revelation of God, and His mysterious and powerful voice; all his thoughts and feelings were instantaneously transformed. He had come to implore the Lord to defend the Moabites, and smite the Israelites, for the feeling of enmity and anger against this people had again risen within him, and then the word of Jehovah in his heart once more suddenly changed his feelings and thoughts against the imaginary foes of Moab, dimly visible in the distance. He entered once more into that state of spiritual exaltation, which irresistibly drew him to pour out

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<sup>1</sup> The Greco-Slavonic and Russian texts differ in the last line of the fifteenth verse, probably because the Septuagint did not keep to the usual Massoreth text, וְאֵנֹכִי קָרָה בָּהּ, 'and I will go yonder to meet,' but read (as has already been done in a parallel passage of the third verse of the same chapter) וְאֵלֶכָה לְקִרְאָת אֱלֹהִים, and 'I will go to the meeting of God,' or, as explained by the Septuagint in the fourth verse: 'I will go to question God.' The interpretation of the Septuagint is preferable to the Massoreth. (1) The pronoun אֵנֹכִי, *I*, is not required by the sense of the sentence, and the particle בָּהּ, 'here,' is omitted in many Massoreth codices (Kennicott, *Bibl. Hebr.*). (2) The particle בָּהּ, 'here,' used twice in the same sentence or in two sentences following each other, as in the passage quoted of the Massoreth text, means 'here and thither,' 'here and there,' but not 'in this place and yonder,' as translated in the Russian text. The fundamental signification of the particle בָּהּ is 'thus,' 'in such manner' (Stockii *Clav. L. S.*), but neither of these interpretations seems quite appropriate. (3) The reading of the Septuagint gives a definite notion in strict accordance with the sense of the third and fourth verses of the chapter, showing the point of view from which Balaam regarded his curses.

his inward feelings<sup>1</sup> in the rapidly flowing cadenced speech peculiar to the soothsayers. Scarcely understanding himself what he was doing in his state of spiritual exaltation, he turned with a quick and abrupt step to the place of sacrifice; the king of Moab with his elders was standing by his burnt offering, and in anxious expectation hastened to ask him: '*What hath the Lord spoken?*' (ver. 17). Filled with Divine inspiration, Balaam, in answer to the anguished question of the Moabites, *took up his parable*, and in a solemn, trembling voice said (ver. 18): '*Rise up, Balak, and hear: hearken unto me,*<sup>2</sup> *thou son of Zippor.*'

Ver. 19.—'*God is not a man, that he should lie.*'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following acknowledgment of one of Job's friends, Elihu, is a good explanation of a similar spiritual state: '*For I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me. Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles. I will speak, that I may be refreshed: I will open my lips and answer*' (Job xxxii. 18-20).

<sup>2</sup> In the Greco-Slavonic text the word сѣнѣтѣа (witness) is placed instead of the word мѣѣ (unto me), used in the Russian translation. This difference proceeds from the different interpretation of the Hebrew word עֵד; the Septuagint took it to signify '*witness*' (root עֵד) united to the pronoun suffix of the first person; but the Massoreths read עִי, and considered it as the preposition עִי (root עִי), '*to*' '*with*,' with the same suffix. The Massoreth reading cannot be taken as authentic. Michaelis had already found a mistake in the Hebrew construction in the word הָאֵלֹהִים, united with עִי and not with אֵל or ל, accusative case as in other passages. (See De Geer, *Bil.* p. 72.) In the Syrian and Samaritan texts this passage is interpreted '*according to my testimony.*' This explanation seems the most probable; precisely we have to admit that in the original there was the word עֵדָה, '*testimony*,' '*symbol*,' '*parable*,' '*witness*' (Gen. xxi. 30) in the accusative case, as the verb עָדָה is used in the accusative in the signification of '*to mind*,' '*to hearken*' (Steinberg).

<sup>3</sup> The difference between the Greco-Slavonic διαρρηθῆναι, '*to vacillate*,' '*waver*' (to be deceived), and the Russian лгать (to lie), proceeds in all probability from the indistinctness of the Hebrew consonants. The Septuagint read וַיִּפְתָּח (from פָּתַח, to vacillate '*to be perplexed*'), and the Massoreths read וַיִּכְיֶה (from כָּבַח, to lie). It is true that in the *Complutensian Polyglotta* and some of the oldest Septuagint codices we read instead of

Ver. 19. *'Neither the son of man, that he should repent:  
hath he said, and shall he not do it?  
or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?'*

Ver. 20. *'Behold, I have received commandment to bless:  
and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.'*<sup>1</sup>

διapρῆθῆναι—διαψεύσασθαι or διαψεύσεσθαι, in others ἵνα ψεύσῃται, but it appears that all these differences in the readings have proceeded from the acquaintance of the oldest investigators of the Bible with the latest editions of the Hebrew text, and do not give a correct interpretation of some of the expressions under comment. The interpretation 'to lie' is evidently not in accordance with the notion of the Divinity; this is acknowledged even by the heathen, and is a truth which requires no confirmation. It is still less probable that a prophet in a state of Divine inspiration should have uttered such a truism. Besides this, the notion conveyed by the word 'to lie' is so different from that of the word 'to change' in the following parallel line, that it cannot possibly constitute a poetical parallelism with the latter. According to the sense of the context, Balaam does not require a *lie*, but a positive decree of God, which would be useful to Balak, and would only change and paralyse the effects of the first decree (the blessing), but not transform it into a lie. Balak desired the revocation of God's first decree, whilst Balaam declared the impossibility of such a change as contrary to the preordained unchangeable Divine plans of the Ruler of the Universe. Therefore the most appropriate reading is that adopted by the Septuagint διapρῆθῆναι, which, however, must not be interpreted by the words 'to depend'; according to the sense of the Hebrew word נָחַץ, its metaphorical signification is 'to be deceived,' 'to be enticed,' 'to be averted from the truth'; God is not allured, is not deceived by any attractions or expressions of goodwill as a man, for τὸ διapρᾶν means also 'to deceive,' 'to impose on.' Suidas translates this word by ἐξαπατῆσαι, 'to allure,' 'to soften,' and declares that Menander uses διapρᾶν in this sense. He interprets διapρῶμενος by ἐξαπατῶμενος, and he quotes an example taken from Dionysius of Halicarnassus about Hercules: τοῖς μὲν ἔχουσι διapρῶμενος, 'allured by the traces.'

This reading is required by the context. Balak supposes that the second sacrifice on another high place will bribe the God of Balaam, and induce Him to change His first decree. Balaam answers such an impossible hope by bearing witness through inspiration to the incorruptibility and moral independence of Jehovah.

<sup>1</sup> We read in the Slavonic text: СѢ БЛАГОСЛОВЛѢНІИ ПРИВЕДѢНЪ  
ѢСМЪ: БЛАГОСЛОВЛѢЮ, И НЕ ѠВРАЩѢ. The difference between the Slavonic and Russian translations has proceeded, partly from the inaccurate transmission of the Septuagint, partly from the differences in the Hebrew manuscripts. The Greek word παρὶλημμαι, corresponding to the original Hebrew הִתְקַלֵּי, means in the literal sense not 'brought' (as in the Samaritan text and in the Vulgate), but 'received' (Onkelos and Syrian text) something as a pupil from a master, or as a subordinate from his superior (De Geer,

Ver. 21. *'He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob,  
neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel:  
The Lord God is with him,  
and the shout of a king is among them.'*<sup>1</sup>

*Bil.* p. 73). 'I will bless,' instead of 'and he hath blessed,' is to be explained on account of the form בִּרְךָ, which exists in the Massoreth text, whilst the Septuagint, the Samaritan, Syriac, and Arabian texts had apparently a different form בָּרַךְ, which means 'I bless,' or 'I have blessed.' The latter reading is preferable to that of the Massoreth text, which sounds shortened and adds nothing to the sense, whilst, on the contrary, the reading of the Septuagint further discovers Balaam's thoughts, and shows that he is obliged to bless whatever may happen. ΝΕ ΟΥΔΕΡΑΠΩ (I will not avert) οὐ μὴ ἀποστρέψω (Hebrew הִשִּׁיב), in the Samaritan text ἀποστρέψω (I will not step back, I will not withdraw from the blessing) supposes the fulfilment of the blessing of Jehovah. 'I have received commandment to bless' intimates the Divine inspiration, the same as in the twelfth verse, אֲשַׁמֵּר לִרְכִּי, 'I will try to speak out.'

<sup>1</sup> The universally adopted Hebrew text of this verse is not clear, and therefore can hardly be considered as authentic, and some of the modern translators have given it an interpretation which is not sufficiently accurate. The sentence ΝΕ ΕΣΔΕΥΞΑ, ΝΗΚΕ ΟΥΖΩΗΤΕΑ, Greek οὐχ ἔσται οὐδε δόξῃσεται, corresponds in the Massoreth text to לֹא הִבִּיט וְלֹא רָאָה, which literally mean (he?) 'does not see and does not notice.' As the subject is not here directly named, the Biblicists are inclined to think that these predicates refer to God (*Hengst. Bil.* pp. 112, 113). But such an interpretation gives a curious sense to the verse. God (all-seeing) does not see or observe the iniquity and perverseness of his chosen people, although He Himself stands so near to His people and is constantly with them. This conjecture is equally in contradiction with the laws of Hebrew grammatical construction (*Ewald*, 4 B. § 2946), and the predicates רָאָה and הִבִּיט cannot refer to Jehovah. This incongruity has given reason for doubting the authenticity of the passage, so that several modern interpreters agree with Onkelos and the Samaritan and Syrian texts, and are inclined to suppose that the original text was אֲבִיט and אֲרֹאֶה, 'I do not see and do not notice' (see *Hengstenb., ibid.*, and *De Geer, Bil.* p. 75). In this case the word Balaam is the subject (grammatical) to both predicates, as in the ninth verse of the same chapter. This supposition, however, disagrees with the sense of the context, and gives no idea of the actual power and riches of Israel, for what is unnoticed by one person can be visible to others, and if Balaam did not see the iniquity and perverseness in Israel, it does not prove their absence. In this case it seems preferable to accept the reading of the Septuagint. We may quote as an analogy *Gen. xi. 14*, where the Hebrew words הִיא and נִרְאָה correspond in the translation of the Septuagint to ἔσται and δόξῃσεται; hence it must be admitted that the

authentic reading is הָיָה and נִרְאָה, which the Septuagint and the translator of the Vulgate had before them; the latter expressed this form by the words 'est' and 'videtur.' A proof of the correctness of this reading is its correspondence to the context (Gesen. *Hebr. Gram.* § 127, 2) and the grammatical precision with which the different parts of speech, the subject, and its predicates are connected with each other. The subjects of הָיָה and נִרְאָה are אָן (in the Russian translation ОБЪЕДИЕ, rendered in the English version as iniquity), and עֲמָל (in the Russian translation НЕЧАСТІЕ, rendered in the English version as perverseness), but the words אָן and עֲמָל are not rendered with the necessary accuracy in any of the translations. The celebrated biblicist Ewald translates the word אָן by idol, and עֲמָל, idolatry, by analogy with 1 Sam. xv. 23; Isa. lxvi. 3, and follows here the example of Onkelos and the Vulgate (*Jahrbücher*, viii. 9, 28). Another celebrated biblicist, Gesenius, finds that in the passage quoted אָן means 'dissoluteness,' 'lewdness,' and עֲמָל, 'wearisome labour.' Other interpreters suppose that אָן here means 'evil,' 'crime,' or 'harm' (caused by enemies), and עֲמָל, 'suffering,' as its consequence (Hengstenb. *Bil.* pp. 113-116). אָן and עֲמָל are also taken as synonymous, and translated by the expressions calamity and misfortune, as we see in the Russian Bible edited by the Synod. But none of these explanations agrees entirely with the context in which the idea is developed of the perfect and blessed existence of Israel (both material and spiritual). אָן and עֲמָל partially express this idea only in the sense in which these words were taken by the translators of the Septuagint; according to their comprehension, אָן means here μόχθος, and עֲמָל, πόνος. Μόχθος (or μάγος) means 'work,' 'effort,' 'sorrow,' 'misfortune'; therefore a whole agglomeration of disagreeable and vain efforts and feelings (see the signification of μόχθος and πόνος in the Greco-Russian dictionary of Benzeler) which constitute the experience of earthly human life. The word πόνος signifies in reality the concrete manifestation of μόχθος, namely, the whole domain of those vain and painful feelings and sensations which proceed from physical labour (such as agricultural work), and are the necessary consequences of a condition which calls forth useless suffering, μόχθος. In fact, אָן signifies (in a general sense) panting, vain effort, vanity, lawlessness, unrighteousness (*Stockii Clav. L. S.*; Rosenmüller, *Scholia*; De Geer, *Bil.* p. 75; Oort, *Disp. de per.* xii.-xxiv.); all these expressions are partial notions of evil, so that אָן signifies, according to this interpretation, first of all evil in the sense of sin, and its inevitable consequences. According to the generally accepted opinion, עֲמָל, which means 'exhausting work,' 'heavy lot,' is the direct psychological and historical consequence of אָן in accordance with the Divine decree (Gen. iii. 17-19). The words אָן and עֲמָל, understood in this negative signification, express clearly and comprehensibly, even to Balak's uncultured mind, the prosperity and power of Israel. The notions of spiritual and physical evil were so completely blended in the mind of the Israelites and of mankind in general, that they were usually

Ver. 22. 'God brought them out of Egypt :

*He hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.'*<sup>1</sup>

expressed in one word (Oort, *Disp.* p. 20). The last line of the twenty-first verse too differs considerably in the Slavonic translation from the generally adopted reading of the Septuagint, and was probably taken from another manuscript which did not coincide with the usual Massoreth text; it reads as follows: *וְתִרְעָתָהּ כִּן*, 'and the trumpet sound of the king (royal)

in him.' But though the sense of this verse is clear enough by itself, it does not agree with the preceding line, 'The Lord his God is with him,' and does not sufficiently express the manifestation of this Divine presence amongst the Israelites. The interpretation of the Septuagint is, on the contrary, much more salient and in accordance with the facts of the history of Israel: *καὶ τὰ ἐνδοξα ἀρχόντων ἐν αὐτῷ*, 'and wonderful the deeds of the elders amongst them.' It is evident that the Septuagint read, instead of *מִלְחָה*, the words *שָׂרִי* or *שָׂרִים* (Judg. v. 15), which are similar in form in the ancient manuscripts, and mean elders, chiefs, princes (cf. Num. xxii. 8, 14, 15, 21, xxiii. 6, 17), or *נְשִׂאִים* (Num. iii. 24, iv. 34); and instead of *תִּרְעָתָהּ*, a word similar in form and pronunciation, *נִרְעָתָהּ* (derived from *נָרַע*, to tremble, to palpitate), which means 'wonderful striking deeds' (Deut. x. 21; Ps. lxxvi. 7). Therefore the original Hebrew text was probably *שָׂרִי כִן וְנִרְעָתָהּ*. This idea is in complete harmony with the parallel line, 'The Lord his God is with him,' and the truth of this statement is confirmed by the mention of the glorious deeds performed by Israel's chiefs as the true manifestation of their spiritual nearness to the Lord. The differences in the Slavonic translation from the usually adopted reading (according to the Vatican and Alexandrian codices) can be only explained by a mistake of the translator's, who probably read the substantive *δόξα* instead of the adjective *ἐνδοξα* and *ἀρχοντος* instead of *ἀρχόντων*; therefore, according to the above given data, the twenty-first verse should be read as follows: 'There will be no iniquity in Jacob, nor will work be seen in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the glory of his chiefs (elders) is with him.'

<sup>1</sup> This verse is not translated quite correctly in the Russian Bible. The generally adopted Hebrew text, *אֵל מוֹצִיאָם מִמִּצְרַיִם כְּתֹעֲפֹת רֵאִם לוֹ*, means, 'God, Who has brought them out of Egypt, as the strength (?) of the unicorn is with him'; but in some of the Massoreth codices, instead of *מוֹצִיאָם*, we read *מוֹצִיאָו* (Kennicott, *Biblia Hebraica*), that is to say, 'Who has brought him out.' The Septuagint followed this version, so did the translator of the Vulgate; it agrees entirely with *כִּן* (with him), which closes the sentence; farther, as the radical signification of the word *תִּרְעָתָהּ* (from *יָרַע*) is not quite clearly established, it is translated differently—by some as 'rapidity' (in the Russian Bible edited by the Synod), as 'strength' (in the Vienna edition), or as 'strain,' 'exertion' (Hengstenb. *Bil.* pp. 119, 120), 'crushing movements,' 'glitter,' 'alertness.' The ancient texts, such

Ver. 23. *'Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this*

as the Vulgate, Peshita, and Arabic, render it by the word 'strength'; in Onkelos and the Samaritan texts the word 'remarkable' is added to 'strength.' These divergencies exist, because none of these significations really agree with the context, and the uncertainty as to the signification of the root, יָעַץ, prevents any new interpretation from being put forward.

Ewald finds that the signification 'glory' is the most appropriate, and it is the one adopted by the Septuagint (Ewald's *Jahrbücher*, p. 28); but the Septuagint also translates by the word δόξα (glory) the word תְּפִאֲרֶת, which literally means 'glory,' 'splendour,' 'outfit,' 'ornament of the head.' This word is similar in form to תְּעִפּוֹת, and is to be found in several parallel

passages, such as Exod. xxviii. 2; Ps. lxxviii. 61; Isa. xlv. 13; Jer. xiii. 11; Ps. xvi. 9. The word תְּפִאֲרֶת is particularly appropriate in the present

case, and expresses very distinctly and precisely the universal feeling that God is for Israel like the horn of the unicorn (Ps. xcii. 10), which smites the enemies of the chosen people, and the great prophet Isaiah declared in after years to Israel, 'Thy God, thy glory,' δόξα σοι (Septuagint), לְתִפְאֲרֶתְךָ

(Isa. lx. 19). According to these data, the translation of the Septuagint gives us the correct interpretation of this verse; and it would be better to read in the Massoreth text מוֹרִיאוֹ, instead of מוֹרִיָּאִים, and the correct expression תְּפִאֲרֶת, instead of the erroneous תְּעִפּוֹת (cf. Deut. xxxiii. 17).

It is also probable that the copyist may have written by mistake תְּעִפּוֹת, instead of כְּבוֹד, as the two words have a similarity of sound, the consonants being the same, and the fact has to be kept in mind that the ancient manuscripts were dictated by one reader to several scribes; the word כְּבוֹד has nearly the same signification as תְּפִאֲרֶת, that is to say, glory in the sense of strength, beauty (Ps. xxiv. 7, cvi. 20; Ezek. iii. 12).

Unicorn רֵאֵם, μονόκερως (in the Septuagint), plural רֵאֵמִים, properly speaking, means a wild bull, buffalo (Saadia, *Pr. Isaiah*). According to the authority of the Septuagint, the word רֵאֵם, translated as unicorn in nearly all the ancient texts, does not mean the slow rhinoceros, as might have been supposed, but the wild bull (with two horns), known for its strength, fierceness, and speed. In the Book of Deuteronomy (xxxiii. 17), in the Massoreth text, and in the Septuagint this animal is not represented with one horn, but has two horns (κέρα), which have a symbolical signification representing the double strength of Ephraim and Manasseh, which proceeded from the one head of Joseph (see Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles, Book of Numbers*, note 6). In other passages of the Holy Scriptures the unicorn (*reem*) is represented as a strong and untamable animal, which cannot be used for domestic work, nor for bearing burdens, and harrowing field, etc., because 'his strength is great' (Job xxxix. 9-12); his horns are

*time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought !''<sup>1</sup>*

as dangerous as the mouth of the lion (Ps. xxii. 21); they stand out (are exalted) proudly and majestically (Ps. xcii. 10; see Fürst, *Handw.*). According to the cuneiform inscriptions, the Assyrian *rimu*, which is similar to the Hebrew רִמָּה, has the same characteristics and signs; it was a strong and powerful animal; and, judging by the hieroglyphic representations, similar to a (wild) bull with a strongly curved nose, resembling a bison (*Wissensch. K. GF.* (1878), pp. 135, 530; F. Hommel, *Namen der Säugethiere*, Leipzig, 1879, § 227; in Schrader). We often find comparisons drawn from the strength of this animal in the cuneiform inscriptions; for example, *Salman. Monol.* ii. 52, 'I trampled upon this land like a wild buffalo' (see Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften*, p. 456, 21). A strong bull served also in Egypt as the symbol of an invincible destructive force. In one of these inscriptions the Egyptian Pharaoh, Seti I., is extolled for his conquests over the then powerful Hittites in the following terms: 'It is a jackal, which runs at a rapid pace over the country; it is a fierce lion that passes along the most secret paths of all the lands; it is a powerful bull with a pair of sharp horns . . . he has smitten the people of Asia, has thrown the Hittite to the ground, and has killed their princes' (Brugsch, *Egypt*, 442). Thus the strong and terrible horns of the unicorn, or of the (wild) buffalo, which forms the ornament of his head (a weapon of defence), and the palpable expression of his physical strength, represented amongst the ancient nations the symbol of a conquering political power (cf. Ps. cxii. 9, cxxxii. 17; Jer. xlviii. 25). In Ps. xviii. 2 the Lord is called 'rock, fortress, buckler,' and the 'horn of salvation.'

<sup>1</sup> The difference between the Greco-Slavonic and Russian texts proceeds from the inaccuracy of the Russian translation. The Hebrew word כִּי, which is omitted, and the fundamental signification of which is 'for,' 'because,' is sometimes used as an argumentative conjunction, 'so that,' 'notwithstanding'; it is applied in this sense in 1 Sam. ii. 25, and has the same signification in this case (Knobel). The words 'enchantment,' 'divination,' ought to have been placed in the same order in which they stand in the Greco-Slavonic text. The Hebrew word נָחָשׁ (literally, serpent)

which is transmitted by the Russian word ВОЛШЕОУСТВО (КОЛДОВОУСТВО) (enchantment, sorcery) means here observation and explanation of signs, divination concerning the future by means of some exterior manifestations (*Stockii Clav. L. S.*; Gen. xxx. 27, xlv. 5; 1 Kings xx. 33), amongst the ancient nations of the East by the movement of animals (serpents), and by those of the West by the flight of large birds, such as eagles, hawks. The Russians call this manner of investigating the future ВУРОЖДА (enchantment), ГАДАНИЕ, divination (with cards, water, by the features of the face, etc.). The following word קָמַץ, parallel and synonymous with the word נָחָשׁ, proceeds from קָמַץ, to foretell, and signifies the interpretation of some desirable future events in the human life by means of peculiar



Ver. 24. *'Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and*

psychological excitement, or the particular innate discernment of some sorcerer; it signifies that mysterious capacity of the human spirit which accepts and contemplates the germs of future events, or penetrates into the hidden forces of the universe, and casts them like a powerful torrent to harm or heal those against whom they are directed (for such notions of magic, see Chwolson's article, 'Monuments of Ancient Babylonian Writings,' ii., note 192). קסם means sorcery, witchcraft, in the language of the Russian people. Fortune-telling consists in investigation, and is a contemplative act; witchcraft consists in a peculiar spiritual, hypnotic influence exercised upon a certain subject, and is an act effected under the influence of strong nervous excitement. The Septuagint undoubtedly gave this signification to the words נהש and קסם; the word נהש was interpreted by *oluwisubis*, divination by birds, and קסם by *μavrela*, prophecy (in an ecstatic condition) (see *Greco-Russian Dictionary* of Benzeler, signification of *oluwisubis* and *μavrela*). The majority of the Western biblicists translate the word קסם by *incantatio*, conjuration, magic sentence, exorcism, incantations (see Rosenmüller, *Scholia*). That the word נהש means divination is evident by the fact that in Deut. xviii. 14 we read מַעֲנִיִּים, diviners, observers of times, clouds, instead of the word נהש joined to קיסמים. It would also be more correct to render the Hebrew word יֹאמֵר by the Slavonic РЕКЪТЪ, ВОЗВЪКСТІТЪСА (as in Gen. xxii. 14, 'as it is said') in accordance with the Greek *ρήθησεται*, and in Russian *будеть сказано*, 'will be said,' openly what God will accomplish (not create). Finally, as אָמַר, originally 'to pour out,' to show His mercy (see Steinberg, *Hebrew-Russian Dictionary*); the word אָמַר (to speak) is here joined to the complements Jacob and Israel by means of the preposition ל, so that, following the example of the Septuagint, and in conformity to the general use of this preposition, the Hebrew text, יֹאמֵר לְיַעֲקֹב וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל should be rendered 'it will be said to Jacob and to Israel,' and not 'of Jacob and of Israel. In general the Greco-Slavonic translation of this verse is infinitely superior to the Russian. It is very close to the Hebrew text, and expresses the distinct idea closely connected with the context, that, in consequence of the presence of the Omniscient and Omnipotent Deity with Israel, this people need not have recourse to dubious, miraculous means of learning and directing their future destinies. The sons of Israel will be informed in due time of what God will accomplish and of that which awaits them. This interpretation agrees with that of the Blessed Theodoretus, who explains this verse as follows: 'Neither sorcery, nor divination with birds has the power of foretelling that which God will accomplish with Israel, because the Lord God foretells and inspires the Israelites how to act through the voice of His own prophets' (Blessed Theodoretus, Part i. p. 221, Question 43).

*lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.*<sup>1</sup>

This is indeed a wonderful speech, full of elevated thoughts, expressed in brilliant and powerful language, clearly depicting the ideal existence of the chosen people and God's solicitude for them. Fully recognising the sacred importance of these inspired truths, and the necessity of enlightening the superstitious Balak, Balaam calls him to listen to his words with careful attention<sup>2</sup>; and addressing him as '*son of Zippor*,' in token of respect for his royal dignity, he charges him to trust implicitly in his testimony. It is vain for Balak to suppose that Jehovah may show Himself more merciful in a fresh place, and be propitiated by fresh sacrifices and prayers, or change His decrees as to the destiny of Israel and other nations through the constraining force of Balaam's magic power. The moral instability of human purpose, under the influence

<sup>1</sup> The twenty-fourth verse is given more correctly in the Russian translation than in the Slavonic, taken from the Septuagint, which corresponds in idea with the original, although some of its terms are not quite appropriate. The Septuagint uses the word *λαός*, nation, instead of *άνθρωποι*, men, people. *Σκύμνος* stands for young lion; the Massoreths read it differently to the Septuagint, and have translated *לִבְיָא*, lioness. The same reading has been followed by the translators of the Vulgate of the Syriac text and Onkelos.

<sup>2</sup> The charge to give careful attention is suggested by the Hebrew word *קום*, rise, for in the literal sense it is useless, as Balak was standing at that moment by his burnt offering expecting Balaam (ver. 17). We have yet to add that, according to the interpretation of Bochart, the Hebrew word *לִבְיָא* means a lioness, who is fierce because she is feeding her young ones (*Hierozykon*, P. I. lib. III. ch. i. p. 719). The Hebrew word *אָרִי* means, generally speaking, lion, a ferocious animal, from *אָרַךְ*, to burn, to be inflamed with fury (Fürst, Steinb.). In other passages, instead of *לִבְיָא*, *כַּפִּיר* is used as a symbol (Judg. xiv. 5; Ps. xxxiv. 10, xxxv. 17, lviii. 6; Jer. ii. 15; Ezek. xxxii. 2; Nah. ii. 13). In Ps. xvii. 12 are used *כַּפִּיר* and *אָרִי*. In the Greco-Slavonic text the word *γαστροθήσεται*, 'he will be lifted up,' would be interpreted more correctly in accordance with the Hebrew word *יִתְנַשֵּׂא* by the expression 'he rises with the conviction of his invincibility.'

of the impulse of the passions, is not an attribute of the Divine Nature. God is in nowise like unto man, to be won by flattery or servility, nor like an unreliable changeable son of man. 'The nature of God is immutable and unchangeable. The will of God never varies like that of man.'<sup>1</sup> Does not His holy strength suffice to do what He says, or to fulfil what He has commanded to be? Therefore, if Balaam felt in the depths of his soul the command to bless, he could not do otherwise than pronounce the blessing put in his mouth, nor take back the blessing which he had not long pronounced by the inspiration of the God of Israel. And thus, according to the words of Balaam, there would be no destructive unrighteousness in the lives of the true sons of Jacob, nor any overpowering calamity amidst the righteous descendants of Israel. Balaam illustrates this truth by representing, in vivid and salient images, the all-conquering power of the contemporary Egyptian kingdom, which derived its strength from unwavering faith in its gods (especially the god Ammon).<sup>2</sup> The presence of the Lord God is perceptible amongst the holy descendants of Israel, and His saving power appears in the wonderful and terrible deeds of their holy chiefs. The Lord victoriously leads Israel out of the terrible Egyptian bondage, and His power is as saving to the people Israel as it is evidently terrible to their enemies; like the terrible ornament of the unicorn, His conquering and destructive horn is at once His own safeguard and the terror of His enemies. The nearness

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<sup>1</sup> Blessed Theodoretus, vol. i. 220, Question 42.

<sup>2</sup> See Brugsch upon the power of Egypt during the dominion of the eighteenth dynasty in the reign of Tothmes III. (*Egypt*, pp. 301-378, translation of Vlastov) concerning the departure of the Israelites from Egypt at the end of the sovereignty of the eighteenth dynasty (see Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, vol. ii.; Exodus, Appendix). The political connection of Egypt with the hostile northern robber-tribes is represented in a similar manner on the monuments of Tothmes III. and Rameses III. (see Brugsch, pp. 351-353, 566-568). Balaam may have also borrowed some of his colours from the military history of the once formidable Hittites or Assyrians (see Lenorm., *Histoire de l'Orient*, ii. 56).

of the Supreme Being to the chosen people, and the special Divine protection, are manifested by the extraordinary fact, which distinguishes this people from all other nations, that instead of having recourse to the usual uncertain means of ascertaining the Divine intentions, such as divination and sorcery, to the sons of Israel alone was the means given of learning beforehand the decrees and the will of God. At the time necessary, according to the requirement of circumstances, the Spirit of God revealed unto them what the Lord would do for the welfare of His people.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the hand of God, strong and terrible like the horn of the unicorn, manifests itself still more distinctly in the historical life of Israel. At the approach of his enemies, Israel rises like an infuriated lioness, passionately attached to her cubs, and advances majestically like a strong and terrible lion to meet his enemies, in the firm consciousness of his own invincible strength. Like unto the lion, who devours his prey and licks the blood of his torn victims, Israel will not end his victorious struggle with the foes who have challenged him before he has appropriated their spoil (their riches) and turned to his own profit the labour of the prisoners of war.

## BALAAM'S THIRD PARABLE

(*Numbers* xxiii. 25—xxiv. 9)

§ 5 (*a*) Balaam's second blessing, which has just been quoted, was still more displeasing to the Moabite king; the vivid picture of the spiritual and political greatness of the Israelites, represented by the prominent traits of the Egyptian monarchy, so dreaded by the nations of Palestine, shattered the Moabites'

<sup>1</sup> Instead of divination by inward conditions (𐤁𐤕𐤕) proceeding from an apparent Divine revelation in the soul of man, or the manifestation of superior forces in the form of words, the chosen people had a whole series of spiritual and powerful revelations through the prophets; therefore the words that 'Jacob and Israel will be informed at the right time of the deeds of God' must be taken to signify not only prophecies, but miracles (cf. Deut. xviii. 18-22).

last hope of the possibility of their foes being dispersed through the power of Balaam's magic words. Balak's anxious hopes had been twice disappointed before the eyes of his elders, and he could no longer contain his vexation and his fear lest Balaam, carried away by the inspiration that had fallen on him, should pronounce yet a greater blessing in favour of Israel, and he authoritatively said, '*Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all*' (ver. 25). Such a speech undoubtedly produced a painful impression on Balaam. He came to himself, and again felt a thrill of sympathy for the unfortunate Moabites; a feeling of the difficulty of his position and some vexation at the impossibility of fulfilling Balak's desire superseded the ecstatic trance which had possessed him but a few minutes ago.<sup>1</sup> In a voice broken by vexation and hopelessness, Balaam again reminded the Moabite king that he was obliged to submit to the decrees of this mysterious and Omnipotent Lord (ver. 26). Balak seemed at first pacified by this explanation, but his faith in Balaam's famous magic power and the thought of God's inexhaustible mercy moved him to make yet another effort to induce Balaam to curse the hateful strangers come from Egypt *from a high place, which would be still nearer to their camp*. The coarse, superstitious, and spiritually blinded mind of Balak could not realise that the same obstacles might again arise and prevent the Mesopotamian soothsayer from obtaining the Lord's consent to smite Israel, notwithstanding his sevenfold sacrifice to propitiate the Deity on his behalf.<sup>2</sup> From the point of view of the

<sup>1</sup> These fluctuations of thoughts and feelings are not mentioned in the text, but they may be admitted as probable and natural from a psychological point of view; it would be impossible to suppose that Balaam remained calm and immovable in these moments and amidst such surroundings. The wave of Divine inspiration once over, he returned to his usual frame of mind, and must have realised the difficulty of his position.

<sup>2</sup> The commentator Clericus proves by quotations from Suetonius, Curtius, and Gellius, that Balak acted in this case according to the usual custom of the time in offering a third and fourth sacrifice, if the first had failed in obtaining the desired sanction of the gods (Keil's comment *in loco*; and De Geer, p. 82).

ancients, Balak might have explained to himself the unexpected and incomprehensible failure of the celebrated Mesopotamian soothsayer by the fact that none of the high places which had been chosen for the sacrifices had found favour in the eyes of the Lord, and therefore the sacrifices had not been pleasing (cf. 1 Kings xx. 23). Anyhow, he proposed to Balaam to go with him to another place. *'And Balak said unto Balaam, Come, I pray thee, I will bring thee unto another place; peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence'* (ver. 27). Balaam did not oppose the wish of the Moabite king, and apparently even followed him willingly; so that, after taking all necessary indications as to the position of the imaginary enemies of Moab, the king and the soothsayer, followed by the elders, moved with all due precautions in a north-western direction, and in a few hours reached the spot chosen by Balak, the steep hill of Peor, which looks towards the wilderness<sup>1</sup> (ver. 28). As the commentators of the Bible understand, here and in some other passages (cf. Num. xxxiii. 48; Deut. iii. 29),

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<sup>1</sup> It is to be supposed that Mount Peor, or Fegor, formed a western branch of the mountains of Abarim, in the same direction as Fasgi, only nearer to the Dead Sea, opposite Beth-jesimoth, not far from the mouths of the Jordan, from whence the whole Israelite camp was visible. The situation of this promontory is more closely defined by the words 'toward the wilderness.' According to Num. xxiv. 1, the word *הַשִּׁמּוֹן*, wilderness, designates the whole northern coast of the Dead Sea, and also the plains of Moab, which bear the same name. This is suggested by the words 'that looketh,' which do not form a general geographical characteristic of the locality, but show that this place was suitable for Balak's object. That this same wilderness was also defined by the word *יְשִׁמּוֹן* is evident from the fact that the place where the Israelite camp was pitched also bore the name of Beth-jesimoth (cf. Num. xxxiii. 48, 49); and if it is undoubted that Jesimoth applied to the Arabia situated on the northern coast of the Dead Sea, the words 'which looketh' give a pretty clear definition of the situation of Mount Peor, which must have risen straight above the plain of Moab to the east. We gain the same information by the following passages from Deut. iii. 29: 'So we abode in the valley over against Beth-peor . . .', and iv. 45, 46: 'These are the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which Moses spake unto the children of Israel, after they came forth out of Egypt; on this side Jordan, in the valley over against Beth-peor . . .', therefore

under this name the whole valley of the Jordan from the northern coast of the Dead Sea, it is to be supposed that Mount Peor rose almost perpendicularly over the plains of Moab where the whole Israelite camp was pitched at that time.

Balaam was, however, induced to mount this high place more by Balak's insistence than by his own wish. He already felt weary, and had no longer such a firm intention of appealing to the Lord for sanction to curse the enigmatical nation come out from Egypt; however, in order to console the Moabite king, and show his own sincere readiness to fulfil his request, he, like the first time, at once himself proposed to the Moabite chief to build seven altars, and prepare seven bullocks and seven rams (ver. 29). '*And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar*' (ver. 30).

(b) Whilst the preparations for the new sacrifice were being made, Balaam again felt the same wonderful and enthusiastically beneficent strain come over him; he felt the

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the Israelites who camped in Arabia saw Beth-peor immediately before them. This coincides with the explanations given in the Onomastikon, in various passages where Peor is mentioned, and contributes to a still more exact definition of the place. According to Eusebius, Φογὼρ, Peor, lies above Lybia, situated in the valley of the Jordan. Φογὼρ καὶ Βεθφογὼρ ὁ ὄρος Μωάβ, ἐν ᾧ τὸν Βαλαάμ ἤγαγεν ὁ Βαλάκ, ὑπέρκειται δὲ τῆς νῦν Λιβιάδος καλουμένης, which words are translated by St. Jerome by the expression 'in supercilio Liviadis.' Under the words 'Αραβὼθ Μωάβ is written, ἐστὶν ἐπὶ τοῦ Ἰορδάνου κατὰ Ἱεριχώ καὶ ἐστὶ τόπος εἰς δεῦρον δεικνύμενος παρὰ τῷ ὄρει Φογὼρ, ὁ παρακεῖται ἀπέναντον ἀπὸ Λιβιάδος ἐπὶ Ἑσσεβοῦς (cf. Reland, i. p. 496) τῆς Ἀραβίας ἀντικρὺ Ἱεριχώ. According to these indications, Peor was situated above the Moabite plains opposite to Jericho, on the way from Lybia to Eusebon: in the Onomastikon, under the word Δανάβα, Mount Peor is said to be situated at a distance of nearly seven Roman miles from Eusebon, and Βεθφογὼρ, the town of Beth-Fegor, was situated near Mount Fegor, opposite Jericho, six miles higher, that is to say, more to the east (compare the expression ἀνωτέρω under Araboth-Moab) than Lybia (ἀνωτέρω Λιβιάδος σημειοῦς 5); see Hengst. *Bibl.* pp. 249, 250.

We have yet to keep in mind what has been very truly said by the English commentator Grove, that we must be very careful in affirming the identity of the different localities named in the Bible, and therefore all the indications still remain more or less hypothetical (Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, iii. Num. xxiii. 28, note 8).

breathing of the mysterious heavenly spirit towards which his heart ardently yearned. He passed over in rapid thought all the wonderful changes of thoughts, feelings, and desires through which he had passed during that day; with involuntary joy he recalled the moment when the stormy spirit of the magian, fierce, impetuous, dark and terrible as a roaring torrent, had suddenly changed into the calm, shining, warm light of the prophet's enraptured contemplation. It became clear to him that God was pleased to bless Israel, for He is not a man that He should change. All the events which had occurred since his departure from Pethor led him to the conviction of Jehovah's special favour towards Israel; they strengthened his assurance in the immutability of God's will, and opened his heart more and more to the breathings of the Divine Spirit.<sup>1</sup> Thus enlightened, and understanding that the Lord was only pleased to bless Israel, Balaam therefore went no more 'to seek for enchantments,' as he had previously done on the heights of Baal and Pisgah,<sup>2</sup> that is, he did not seek to know the Lord's

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<sup>1</sup> According to the opinion of some commentators of the Bible, Balaam had become assured of Jehovah's desire to bless Israel from former revelations of the Lord (as, for example, the Vulg. *quumque vidisset Balaam*), whilst others think that it was the result of an instantaneous Divine revelation which deepened in him the effects of former revelations; it would be more exact to say that the one is connected with the other (Hengst., *Bil.* p. 130). A supernatural light was shed on the soothsayer's mind and opened it to the comprehension of hidden things; this light is like some living thing, and is therefore called the Spirit of God, that is to say, inspired by God (Migne, *Curs. Comp. ad h. l.*)

<sup>2</sup> The difference between the Greco-Slavonic and Russian translations in the expression ΠΟ ΟΒΗΥΑΙΟ ΚΡΟΕΜΕΣ (according to his custom) and КАКЪ ПРЕЖДЕ (as before) proceeds from the different interpretations of the Hebrew word כַּעֲשֶׂה כַּעֲשֶׂה, which means literally 'as at that, and at another time;' and, in a broader sense, it means 'as at first, as on former occasions,' according to the Syriac translations, or 'as always.' But as it is evident that it was not the first time that Balaam had recourse to this manner of learning the will of God, the most appropriate interpretation would be to say 'as always,' or, even more exactly, 'according to his custom,' as it is in the Septuagint (in the Vatican codex, Cantab.



commands, after the manner of the Chaldean astrologers, through the significative phenomena of the surrounding nature, nor did he turn his face to the north, where is the sacred dwelling of the Mesopotamian gods, 'the mountain of the East'; but he set his face to the northwest toward the Jordan wilderness (plain), where stood the myriads of the peaceful, simple tents of the sons of Israel<sup>1</sup> (Num. xxiv. 1 compared with ii. 2). And Balaam lifted up his eyes with a prophetic gaze, and '*saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him*' (xxiv. 2).

These last words require an explanation. The expression 'the Spirit of God came upon him' indicates a special, although not lengthy, connection of the Divine Spirit with Balaam. The Spirit of God, as a separate Person (Hypostasis), can only be felt by man under the condition of observable effects on the latter. Every such effect of the Divinity is a manifestation of His will, and the will of God manifests itself in perfect reasonableness, omnipotence, holiness (moral freedom), goodness (love), righteousness, and blessedness.<sup>2</sup> The human individual represents in himself a rational and sensitive will; therefore the relation of the Divine will to the human will, or the Divine manifestation in the human spirit through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost (Jer. xx. 8, 9; Heb. i. 1), shows itself either slowly and in scarcely perceptible

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edition). The Septuagint thus expressed the idea, which can be traced through the whole narrative, that Balaam used in his magic practice special means, such as סִמְלֵי, which signifies the sign of 'the powerful prophetic serpent,' which was the personified symbol of the god Ea, and appeared in the cosmos or in the normal development of nature.

<sup>1</sup> According to De Geer, Balaam was possessed by a more powerful Divine inspiration, which this time kept him from using his superstitious practice (p. 85). The Blessed Theodoretus gives the following explanation of this passage: 'Balaam had found out by experience the uselessness of his enchantments, and recognised the superior power of Him Who made his tongue pronounce "that which the Lord put in his mouth." Balaam therefore abandoned his usual magic practices, and devoted his lips to the service of God' (Blessed Theodoret. Part I. p. 221, Question 44).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Archbishop Philaret, *Dogmatic Theology*, vol. i. pp. 46-62, 3rd ed.

degrees, or powerfully, impetuously, and obviously, according to the moral and natural qualities of the individual who is the object of this manifestation. As the inner life of the Deity consists in a feeling of absolute blessedness or perfect joy,<sup>1</sup> so is the inspiration proceeding from it manifested by joy, by luminous, pure (holy), gentle emotions, clear in their consciousness.<sup>2</sup> This inspiration comes upon a person, or is poured out (Acts ii. 17, 18). It is not the wind, but only a sound 'as of a rushing mighty wind'; it is not fire, but something that burns without consuming, and, like the wind, we cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth' (John iii. 8; Acts ii. 2-4; 2 Peter i. 21). It is the overflowing of the human spirit by spiritual light and fire,<sup>3</sup> the filling of the human thoughts with the mind of the Lord (1 Cor. ii. 16). But this inspiration, 'piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow' (Heb. iv. 12), expresses itself in different degrees, according to the righteousness of the prophet. The prophets generally received the revelation of God in a state of the highest spiritual emotion, and expressed the contents of these revelations in the form of songs and inspired monologues. This inward emotion was sometimes so powerful that it manifested itself by conduct that was incomprehensible to the ordinary observer. The prophet of Bethel did not address his guest calmly in the usual manner, but 'cried unto him' (אָרָא) when the word of the Lord came to him (1 Kings xiii. 21). '*Saul, when the Spirit of God was upon him, stripped off his clothes . . . and lay down naked all that day,*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Archbishop Philaret, *Dogmatic Theology*, vol. i. p. 62, St. John xv. 11, xvii. 23; Ps. xlv. 7, 8; Heb. i. 9.

<sup>2</sup> The Divine inspiration (revelation) is described thus in Ps. cxix. 11; Isa. lxi. 3; Acts ii. 46; Rom. xiv. 17; Gal. v. 22. The highest degree of prophetic emotion is expressed by the word *δυναμεις* (Luke i. 44; Acts ii. 46; Ps. xlv. 8).

<sup>3</sup> The word 'full,' taken literally from the Greek, 'filled with, full of the Holy Ghost,' is met with constantly in Acts iv. 31, vi. 3, vii. 55, etc.

and all that night' (1 Sam. xix. 24). The prophets appeared 'mad' to the coarse-minded crowd (2 Kings ix. 11). The force of inspiration was sometimes so great that the prophet was thrown to the ground and fell on his face' (Ezek. i. 28, iii. 23; Dan. x. 8, 9); '*the hand of the Lord was strong upon him*' (Isa. viii. 11; Ezek. iii. 14; 2 Kings iii. 15). He cannot keep back that which moves him so powerfully; for 'when the lion roars, who will not fear? when the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?' says the prophet Amos (iii. 8). *The inner inspiration which filled Balaam's soul must have been still more unrestrainable, and the acuteness of its expression even painful to his physical organism.* He was not accustomed to visions in a state of wakefulness. He had beheld the vision of the angel in a state of extreme angry excitement, and after several miraculous preparatory manifestations (xxii. 23-31). Notwithstanding the keen impressionability of his nervous system, his iron will required violent shocks (accompanied by spasmodic convulsions, screams, and cries) in order to transport him into a state of ecstasy. Judging by his persistent desire to fulfil the Moabites' request, even in opposition to the will of God, Balaam was not so much a prophet by *vocation* as by giftedness. Some, therefore, with sufficient justice, regard him only as a superior magian and soothsayer; nevertheless, according to the testimony of St. John Chrysostom, 'it is peculiar to the prophet to be in a state of ecstasy, to endure constraint and violence, to be carried away by his emotions and act insanely, like one possessed.'<sup>1</sup> The ancient classical writers thus describe the condition of prophetic frenzy or the height of prophetic excitement: 'The colour of the man's face changes when he is under the Divine influence, his hair stands up, his lips tremble, and his bosom heaves. The inspired person seems supernaturally majestic; he speaks in singing tones, which seem to come from beyond the grave; the eyeballs, persistently

<sup>1</sup> St. John Chrysost., *Explanation of the Ep. to the Corin.*, Dialogue xix. 4, Bishop Theophanus, xii. 3.

fixed upon one point, are turned up; the divinity seems to have taken complete possession of his soul.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the testimony of the Holy Scriptures as to the state of the prophets in the moment when they received Divine inspiration or revelation leads us to conclude that Balaam passed through the same state of violent and oppressive excitement or ecstasy when 'the Spirit of God came upon him.' According to many indications in the Bible, the holy prophets received Divine revelation in a state of ecstasy or rapture which was similar to a heavy sleep (see Gen. ii. 21, xv. 12; Job iv. 13, xxxiii. 15; Acts x. 10, xxii. 17; cf. Luke ix. 32, 33; Mark ix. 6; 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3). In the passage quoted from the Book of Genesis the Septuagint translated the word תְּרִימָה, which means 'condition of the soul preceding revelation,' by the word 'ἔκστασις,' ecstasy, with the verb נָפַל, to fall. In the Book of Job the word תְּרִימָה is translated by the word φόβος or δεινὸς φόβος, 'great terror.' In the Acts it is said plainly that the apostles Peter and Paul received Revelation ἐν ἐκστάσει, 'in an ecstasy'; this is confirmed by other passages (compare also with Acts xii. 9-11). In the Book of Genesis (xv. 12) the condition of Abraham's soul in the moment preceding the Lord's revelation is represented thus: '*And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.*' Before the Transfiguration of the Lord on Mount Tabor, the apostles were also 'heavy with sleep' (βεβαρημένοι ὕπνῳ, Luke ix. 32), 'were sore afraid' (Mark ix. 6), and during the vision of glory of the Lord Peter said, '*not knowing what he said, It is good for us to be here*' (Luke ix. 33). Therefore, even the Divine visions vouchsafed to holy men were preceded by a state of heavy sleep, in which self-consciousness is alternately extinguished and flashes out, and command over the limbs of the body fails. At that moment

<sup>1</sup> Köhler, *Prophetismus*, p. 40.

terror or overpowering sleep proves that the power of self-control and of guiding the thoughts is suspended; the great darkness (often not mentioned) signifies the obscuring of the consciousness of the outward world *in consequence of the entire concentration of the mind upon the object of contemplation*. After a few minutes the contemplation (the inclination of the mind towards the object of contemplation) ceases, an obscuring of the consciousness follows, from which the contemplator emerges, as though he awakens, that is, he returns to his normal state.

In virtue of these characteristics of the prophetic condition, Balaam at the moment of actual Divine inspiration must have also felt a certain hysterical oppression, as if he had gone out of himself; it may also be supposed that he fell to the ground in a state of semi-somnolence or torpor (cf. xxii. 31), lost power over himself, so that he was as though he had forgotten himself, and therefore did not clearly recognise the meaning of what he said, and could not even repeat it after returning to his normal condition.<sup>1</sup> But side by side with these painful spiritual sensations,<sup>2</sup> wonderful feelings of holy love and pure rapturous joy must have suddenly arisen in the soul of Balaam. In the light of these Divine impressions he beheld the ideal nature of Israel, its holiness, its victorious spiritual might and peace (entire prosperity), and in a loud voice he declared his third parable.

Ver. 3. *'And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the*

<sup>1</sup> All this is strictly in accordance with the psychological law of recollection. A man usually easily remembers that which has been received by him into his inward being in a calm state of mind and has been assimilated by him, that has entered into his flesh and blood. That which is received involuntarily, as, for example, something learned out of duty or other accessory considerations, is easily forgotten.

<sup>2</sup> Our notions of the spirit and soul are founded on the opinion that the spirit is 'the inner man,' the moral personality, the practical mind (the '*dominating*' element' of the Holy Fathers), and the soul the form of the spirit which manifests itself in the phenomena which constitutes the subject of biology, physiology, psychology, known in the Holy Scriptures under the words 'flesh,' 'carnal subtilty.'

son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Instead of the Greco-Slavonic words φησι ΓΑΓΘΑΕΤΣ, 'he says,' we find in some texts (for example, in that of Vienna) the word 'sentence,' a literal translation of the Hebrew Massoreth דִּנְי, 'sentence,' 'revelation' (of God), 'affirmation.' The words 'the Lord says' are repeated about six hundred times in the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, and others, and in the Septuagint are always translated by the verbal form 'says.' It is possible that this difference was caused by the translators of the Septuagint having everywhere read דִּנְי literally, 'says,' 'announces,' instead of reading דִּנְי (n'um), 'sentence' (properly speaking, the participle of the passive mood 'to have been said'). This reading had, however, sufficient foundation:—(1) The letter נ is sometimes used in the Hebrew language to express the long vowel a; for example, אִנְי instead of אִי, 'he arose,' 'he arises' (Hos. x. 14), עִנְי instead of עִי, 'poor' (see Gesen.-Kossov, *Hebrew Grammar*, § 23, 3, note 1). (2) The verbs with the middle consonant נ are often pronounced and written like verbs with the second consonant, and in the latter the vowels of both syllables always flow together into one long hard vowel; for example, דִּנְי is written דִּי and pronounced kam (cf. Gesen. *Hebrew Grammar*, § 72). (3) In the ancient translations of the Bible, in the Vulgate, the Syriac, Arabic, and Samaritan texts, also with Onkelos, דִּנְי is interpreted by the verbal form of the third person of the singular, 'he says.' The generally adopted Massoreth reading gives a whole sentence *without a personal predicate*, which is against the construction of the Hebrew language. The Greco-Slavonic ἰστυννο зрѣи дλγθωѣс ѿφωѣ (verily seeing) and the Russian СЪ ОТКРЫТЫМЪ ОКОМЪ (with open eye) also show a divergency between the readings of original Hebrew texts. The generally adopted Massoreth expression יָעַף עֵינָיו remains obscure to this day; in some translations it is interpreted 'with a closed eye,' and in others, in the opposite sense, 'with an open eye'; in the Vulgate it is 'cujus obturatus est oculus'; in the Arabian, 'acutus visu.' Ewald in the *Jahrbücher* (viii. p. 32), in accordance with the signification of עָנַף in the Mishna, supposes the word to here mean 'open,' 'to take off a film'; Hengstenberg in *Bil.* p. 136 proves, on the contrary, that עָנַף means 'to shut.' The biblicists differ entirely in their interpretation of עָנַף. Instead of this word, the Septuagint apparently read הִנֵּה הִרְאָה נֶאֱמַר (seeing the truth), which is very similar in form to the Massoreth, and much more comprehensible. (2) Onkelos kept to the same reading as the Septuagint; he transmits in his Targum this passage by 'seeing splendidly.' עָנַף is used once in the Mishna in the sense of 'perforavit,' 'open' (Buxtorf, *Lex. Hebr.*). The majority of modern commentators of the Bible justly reject this interpretation (Tholuck, Ewald, Lengerke, Hengstenberg, Roediger in *Ges. Thesaur.*) as having no philological nor substantial foundation. In the Arabian text it is translated by the word 'shut,' and in Hebrew the word עָנַף is

Ver. 4. 'He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling (into a trance), but having his eyes open.'<sup>1</sup>

often used in this sense. In Lam. iii. 8 שָׁתָם is translated by the Septuagint as ἀπέπαξε, 'shut out,' 'placed an obstacle' (enclosed in a tube). The explanation of שָׁתָם in the sense of 'open,' 'to open,' distorts the construction of the sentence; for in the next line it is directly said נִלְי עֵינָיִם, 'his eyes are open,' and this would only lead to a synonymous and misplaced tautology, whilst the translation of the word שָׁתָם by the word 'shut' would form an antithesis to the sentence 'his eyes are open' (and might be interpreted thus, 'with shut bodily eyes, but with an open spiritual eye,' which involves a partial dimness of physical vision). As we have no parallel passages to serve us as guides, the interpretation of the word שָׁתָם in this sense or another can only be determined by a close and careful study of the context of the verse. Therefore, the interpretation of שָׁתָם by 'shut' has always seemed an enigma till quite lately, when its signification has been discovered by the modern investigations of analogical conditions in the mysterious domains of second-sight (sommambulism) and of pagan mantology, particularly amongst the Siberian shamans (sorcerers). Balaam calls himself a man with a shut (bodily) eye, because a state of ecstasy was the condition, means, and foundation of his prophetic contemplations and divination; and the essential point of an ecstatic state is a suspension of the sensibility of the outward senses in order to disclose the inner feelings (Kurtz, *Geschichte*, ii. p. 470, and Oort, p. 27).

<sup>1</sup> The Russian and Greco-Slavonic texts of these two lines differ. This divergency may have partly proceeded from the fact that the Septuagint used another manuscript than the one usually adopted, partly from the different points of view of the translators of the Septuagint and of the editors of the generally adopted text, the rabbi of the sixth century after Christ, known as the Massoreths. The last line of this verse, which is very difficult to understand, is read as follows in the Massoreth text: נִפֹּל וְנִלְי עֵינָיִם, literally, 'falls, but eyes are open.' What sounds unnatural in this rendering is that the conjunction 'but,' Hebrew וְ or כִּי, places in apposition to each other two different kinds of notions which cannot be compared with each other, 'to fall' and 'to open.' Secondly, this interpretation disconnects this line with the preceding, and renders its meaning so obscure that the word 'his' has been added to 'eyes' in the newest editions—the Russian, for instance. 'His eyes are open.' This leads to the supposition that the Massoreth text is a mutilation of the original, which is the more probable, as it is evident that the translation of the Septuagint was made from another text. If we take as a guide the passages where the Septuagint's translation agrees in sense and expressions with the Massoreth text, we may undoubtedly accept that the Septuagint instead of reading נִפֹּל (falls, but), read כָּהֵלֵם (cf. Gen. xxxi. 24, xl. 5, 9, xli. 8. 12, 17, 22), 'in his dream'; and instead of עֵינָיִם, 'eyes,' read עֵינָיו, 'his eyes'

Ver. 5. *'How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! and thy tabernacles, O Israel!'*

Ver. 6. *'As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes, which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters.'*<sup>1</sup>

(cf. Ps. xi. 4; Job xli. 18). Therefore, the Septuagint must have read in the manuscript before them, בְּהֵלֶם גִּלְי עֵינָיו, 'in his dream his eyes are open' (Balaam's). This reading is evidently better and more appropriate in form and idea than the Massoreth, and seems therefore more probable. The verb נָפַל is never used to express sleep or slumber, even in the figurative sense; and when used to express the manifestation of ecstasy, as in Gen. ii. 21, xv. 12, it is always completed by the word תְּרִדְמָה, which means 'deep sleep.' We cannot also leave unnoticed the circumstance that the Septuagint, for some unknown reason, by the words 'in his sleep,' did not refer to עֵינָיו גִּלְי, 'his eyes are open,' but to the preceding line, 'which saw the vision of the Almighty,' and in consequence of this undoubtedly interpreted the original הִרְוָה<sup>וֹ</sup> as an accomplished action in the past tense 'he saw,' εἶδε, instead of keeping to the verbal form 'sees' in the present tense. This construction has also been retained in the Slavonic text, but it is not difficult to prove its incorrectness: (1) The spiritual conditions of the given moment are here represented as conditions or manifestations that are prolonged. (2) It is absolutely necessary to join the word בְּהֵלֶם, 'in his sleep,' to the following, and not to the preceding, words, in view of the symmetrical and poetical parallelism of Balaam's parables; in the contrary case the line 'which saw the vision of the Almighty' would be much too long in comparison with the last, 'having his eyes open.' (3) In all the ancient translations the word נָפַל, corresponding to בְּהֵלֶם, 'in sleep,' refers to עֵינָיו גִּלְי, 'eyes are open'; and the preceding line concludes by the word 'sees.' Therefore, according to the given indications, the two last lines should be read, 'as he sees the vision of God his eyes are open in his sleep.'

<sup>1</sup> Several words of the Greco-Slavonic text are not quite accurately interpreted, and are not in strict accordance with the context of the fifth and sixth verses. The Greco-Slavonic Δόμη οἶκοι does not give the proper signification of the Hebrew word אֹהֳלִים, 'tents,' and does not agree with the context; the whole narrative supposes the temporary residence of the Israelites in their tents; in the same manner οἰκῶναι does not answer to the Hebrew מִשְׁכָּנֹת, 'habitations.' In the Russian edition, on the contrary, both words are transmitted correctly and appropriately. The Septuagint evidently read and understood the sixth verse differently from the Hebrew text as generally adopted in the present time. Instead of בְּנֵהָלִים נִפְּוִי, 'as the valleys are they spread forth,' the Septuagint apparently read בְּנֵהָלִים צִלְלִים or צִלְיִם, 'as shady valleys' (or hollows covered with



Ver. 7. 'He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters; and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.'<sup>1</sup>

wood). The verb נָמַע, *to spread, to expand*, does not fit in with the word נְהָלִים, *damp valley*, and is probably a mutilation of the original manuscript (see Oort, p. 28). Therefore the word צִלְיִם seems more authentic, as it entirely harmonises with the following parallel line, 'as gardens by the river's side,' and expresses more picturesquely than the term generally adopted the beauty and comfort of Israel's dwellings. The third line of the sixth verse reads in the Greco-Slavonic, ὡσεὶ σκηναί, ἡς ἐπηξέ Κύριος ἱάκω κέψιν ἰάπε βοαρδζή Γᾶς (as the tents, which the Lord erected), and in the Russian text translated from the Massoreth какъ алоѣныя деревья, насажденныя Господомъ (as the aloe trees planted by the Lord). This difference was caused by the Septuagint deriving אֶהְלִים from אֶהָל (tent), a reading retained by the Samaritan, Syrian, Arabian, and Chaldean Targumists; while the Russians, on the contrary, following the example of modern commentators (Hengstenberg, Rosenmüller, De Geer, Oort), derived אֶהְלִים from אֶהָל (aloe). To take the word אֶהְלִים in the sense of 'tent' is the more easy, because here, as in Prov. vii. 17, and apparently in the first editions of the Pentateuch, stood the word אֶהְלִים, and not אֶהְלוֹת, which would have been the appropriate word according to Ps. xlv. 8, and the Song of Solomon iv. 14. For this reason the word נָמַע was not understood in its proper sense by the Septuagint. The true אֶהָל, 'aloe,' is called 'aghl' in the East Indies, the native country of this tree (Steinberg).

<sup>1</sup> In the present case we exactly follow the interpretation of the Septuagint. The generally adopted Massoreth reading is different from that of the Septuagint. Instead of the Massoreth text יֵלֵךְ מִן מַדְלֵי וְרָעוּ בָמִים רַבִּים (the water will flow out of his buckets, and his seed shall be like great waters), the Septuagint (and Onkelos, the Syriac, and the Targum besides) used the following text (see Meisneri *Olav.*):—יֵלֵךְ אִדָּם מִלֵּדֵי—וְרָעוּ בְנֵי רַבִּים, literally, 'a man will come from his descendants, and his hand' (cf. Gen. xlix. 8) 'will be on many nations.' St. Cyprian, in citing this passage (*Against the Jews*, Book II. x.), keeps most accurately to the translation of the Septuagint. In a note referring to the passage where the Father of the Church quotes Balaam's words, the learned Fell affirms that all the other Greek interpreters followed the version of the Septuagint, as the expression 'water flowing (or flowing out) of a bucket' had become proverbial amongst the Hebrews, and was used in the sense of 'a man, who is born' (Romanus Teller, *Die heil. Schr.*). This reading agrees better with the context than the Massoreth version, particularly in the second half of the verse. It is, however, possible that the Septuagint used the same text as the Massoreths, but interpreted it on the authority of other parallel passages,

Ver. 8. 'God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows.'<sup>1</sup>

explicatively and not literally. The proverbial expression 'the water flows out of the bucket,' instead of 'a man is born,' may have served as the foundation for this interpretation, also the similarity in the writing of זרע, 'seed,' and זרען, 'hand' (as the symbol of power). In Ps. lxxxix. 25, of David (or more exactly, of the Messiah) it is said, 'I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.' In Rev. xvii. 1, 15, the waters are used as the symbols of the men, peoples, multitudes, and nations who do not know God, and work for the devil, who reigns over them in the person of the woman—the whore, that is to say, 'of the great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth' (ver. 18). The sense expressed in the first half of the verse is confirmed in the second. The Russian text, which is identical with the Massoreth, reads: превзойдетъ Агара царь еро и возвысится царство еро = His king will surpass Agag, and his kingdom will be exalted. Instead of reading מַלְכֵּינִי, the Septuagint (and the Samaritan) evidently read מַגּוֹג, Magog (in accordance with the parallel passages in Ezek. xxxviii. 2, xxxix. 6, where by the word Magog is meant kingdom, or the land of Gog). In view of the correspondence with מַלְכֵּינִי, the Septuagint may have read מַלְכֵּינִי instead of מַלְכֵּינִי (his king). It is, however, more likely that in the original edition of the Septuagint βασιλεὺς (king) stood instead of βασιλεῖα (as adopted by the Alexandrian and other manuscripts). According to the testimony of the Hexapla of Origen, the distinct and exact translation of Symmachus (and even Theodotion) gives us the following version: καὶ ὑψωθήσεται ὑπὲρ Γῶγ βασιλεὺς αὐτοῦ. In all the other translations of this verse the king is the subject in the sentence. As to the authenticity of the reading of מַלְכֵּינִי in this and the twenty-third verse, it is confirmed by that sole prophecy about Gog of the prophet Ezekiel, who lived much later: 'Art thou he' (Gog) 'of whom I have spoken in old time by My servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years, that I would bring thee against them' (Ezek. xxxviii. 17). The word מַלְכֵּינִי, will be exalted, in the sense of honoured (Ps. xli. 10; Dan. iv. 34), suggests the king rather than the kingdom. Concerning מַלְכֵּינִי in the sense not of optative but of the future tense, Ewald (*L. B.* § 443, quest. 6) explains this unusual peculiarity of the language. Therefore the correct interpretation of the seventh verse would be: 'A man will proceed from his seed, and will reign over many nations; his king will surpass Gog, and his kingdom will be exalted.'

<sup>1</sup> The Greco-Slavonic ἐθνη ἐχθρῶν αὐτοῦ; παζώνκι κράτζ σβοήχζ (the tongues of his enemies) is evidently a mutilation of ἐθνη ἐχθρα αὐτοῦ, as we read 'the nations his enemies' in the Syrian, Samaritan, Arabic texts, and also in Onkelos. The last line should be translated literally from the

Ver. 9. 'He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.'

Such were the inspired tones in which the Mesopotamian soothsayer declared the greatness of the chosen people; his words are full of life and poetical colouring; it is easy to see how the Divine thoughts which fill his spirit are rapidly clothed in concrete, vivid images, and as though poured out from his lips. It may be that he only dimly realises what he says (cf. Luke ix. 33), and that he involuntarily depicts, after the manner of an Eastern poet, the utter contrast between his spiritual and physical condition. An unknown and wonderful inspiration had come on the famous son of Beor<sup>1</sup> as he stood in the rays of the setting sun. He

Massoreth: 'and he breaks his arrows' (or throws them) (Steinberg). In the Septuagint this passage is as follows: *kal taís βολαῖς αὐτοῦ καταρκεύσει ἐχθροῦ*, 'and with their arrows they pierce their enemies'; but this is more an explanation than a translation, particularly as the word מִיָּד means to smite, to break, to crush a thing to such a degree that it loses its previous form (cf. Judg. v. 26; Deut. xxxiii. 11; Ps. lxxviii. 25; cf. Oort, *Disp.* p. 31). For this reason the modern commentators (see Oort, p. 32; De Geer, p. 97), Darius, Michaelis, and others, admit the original word to have been מִיָּדָא (hip, loin), in accordance with the Syrian text; but this only increases the difficulty, for it would thus seem that Israel crushes his own spine, that is to say, deprives himself of his own strength (cf. Deut. xxxiii. 11). The only issue is to take the literal translation, 'he crushes his arrows.' The sense of this expression becomes quite intelligible if we compare it with the prophecy of Zechariah (ix. 10), 'And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle-bow shall be cut off,' in which, as well as in the preceding and following verses, the triumph of Israel's struggle is represented in the person of the Messiah against the enemies of the kingdom of heaven, a struggle which finishes by perfect peace. The conqueror ends his struggle, and after the destruction of all his enemies he finds his weapons useless, and destroys them himself as a sign of the coming of unbroken peace. This interpretation is fully confirmed by the next verse, where the ideal of a final peaceful life is more clearly and exactly expressed.

<sup>1</sup> Some commentators of the Bible have expressed the idea that the sacred historian Moses regarded the introductory words of Balaam's speech as the expression of ostentatious self-praise; but this suggestion is quite unfounded, as the whole narrative is evidently represented by Moses himself as the fruit of a supernatural inspiration (Num. xxiv. 2, 'And the Spirit of God came upon him'). In reality, Balaam's solemn words about himself are

declares the Divine revelation with closed eyes; detached from bodily sensations, he neither sees, nor hears, nor feels anything earthly.<sup>1</sup> He has forgotten everything, and in those moments is only conscious of the existence of this wonderful people, and of his own personal relation towards the Almighty Author of his inspiration. In his person speaks one who hears the

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nothing but the usual prophetic formula, which gave the name of the 'Word of God' to the prophet's inspiration. They differ very little from what King David said of himself in 2 Sam. xxiii. 1, 2, and the abundance of epithets is nothing else but the involuntary poetical colouring inherent to Balaam's parables (cf. Hengstenb. *Bil.* p. 143). In the present case Balaam spoke (expressing himself in the words of Homer) ἐκὼν δέκοντι γέ θυμῳ, that is to say, carried away by an insurmountable excitement which contrasted with the suppressed feeling in the depths of his heart of desiring to cast an evil spell on the sons of Israel (cf. Philo, *de Vita Moysis*, lib. i.). Swavingius has proved in his work (*Class.* ii. 322) that the Eastern orators and poets have the custom on solemn occasions of praising themselves and their office in florid terms (De Geer, *Bil.* p. 87).

<sup>1</sup> In the ecstatic condition the closing of the outward feelings goes hand in hand with the opening of the inner. Steinbeck gives us interesting data upon the subject in his work, *Der Dichter ein Seher* (Leipzig 1836, p. 121 f.). He considers isolation from the outer world, self-concentration, and a yearning for solitude 'as the first step to the development of the spiritual and physical condition of the seer and the poet.' In general it is natural, says he, 'that the soul should be too much distracted in the noise and whirl of the outer world and be diverted from higher things. A mind active in material life stands in direct opposition to the spirit, which is darkened and crushed by the activity of the senses, and only becomes active when the senses slumber or are inert. If we therefore wish to concentrate our thoughts deeply upon one subject, we seek solitude, we close our ears, and eyes; this is the first means of acquiring the "predominance of the spirit; not that which the French call *présence d'esprit*, but the state which they define as *imperturbabilité*." This is a concentration of the spirit which puts away all the impressions which penetrate through the senses, so as not to trouble the limpidity of the soul. The ancients called this the sleep and the vigilance of the spirit; Philo says that the awakening of the senses leads to the slumber of the spirit; whilst, on the contrary, the awakening of the spirit is invariably accompanied by the inactivity of the senses. As the stars disappear at the rising of the sun and reappear after its setting, so does the vigilant spirit weaken the impressibility of the senses whilst its slumber widens the field of activity of the senses and of all the emotions which were restrained by the predominance of the spirit. The more the soul is tranquil and cut off from the world, the clearer is the contemplation of the seer, the purer and brighter the flame of the poet; it is like the butterfly, the beauty and brightness of whose wings depend upon the calm and solitude which surrounded its chrysalis.' 'Men who stand on the highest step of inner

words<sup>1</sup> of the Mighty Lord, who prophesies, seeing the vision of the Omnipotent God; the Divine Spirit has cast Balaam into a condition of mysterious semi-slumber and of the highest ecstasy; he is completely absorbed in the depths of his 'inner man'; he has fallen into a heavy sleep and lies on the ground, but his spiritual eyes are open; it is as though a film has fallen from them. 'The image, which he had never before seen, rises suddenly in sharply defined strokes like a flash of lightning before his spiritual vision. The true nature of the past appears to him in a distinct form; he sees the present unveiled, and that which must come to pass in the future stands before his spirit in palpable features and images.'<sup>2</sup> The prophet now sees with wonderful distinctness the real qualities upon which depends the glorious existence of Israel's descendants. 'The immediately preceding bodily contemplation

development may, of course, be gifted with spiritual inspiration without the closing of their outer senses; the material side of their nature is so purified, their spirit so powerful, that they have no reason to apprehend any disturbing influence; but a man like Balaam, who stood on the lowest step of the inner spiritual life, and had only momentarily risen from his usual state through the action of the Divine Spirit, required to have his eyes closed as a necessary preliminary to the opening of his spiritual sight. The Divine Spirit could only reveal itself and lead him into higher spheres after having forcibly withdrawn him from the impressions of the material world and their polluting influences on his unpurified mind' (Hengstenb. *Bil.* pp. 137-139). The contemplation of the stars at night may be considered analogical to the contemplation of supernatural things with closed eyes. 'The stars remain at their places in heaven by day, but the naked eye cannot discern them in the daylight; as soon as it grows dark the eye requires no external help to see the stars. In the same manner supernatural things can only be attained in a state of self-consciousness by the true prophet through the help of the Divine grace which enables him to see into the depths and over vast horizons, whilst the usual (heathen) magic art cannot comprehend such things otherwise than by means of an unnatural somnambulistic condition similar to death and night' (Kurtz, *Gesch. d. a. B.* p. 471, note).

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew *וַיִּדְבֹּר* (word, name of the subject), words, full of force. The Septuagint translated *λόγια* as sentences (of an oracle), inspired words (cf. *Greco-Russian Dictionary* of Benzeler and Gratzinsky). According to the explanation of a certain biblicist, Balaam testifies by these words that he has received the Divine Revelation of the future destinies of Israel, which, by the force of inspiration, appear in his mind as already actually existing (De Geer, *Bil.* p. 89).

<sup>2</sup> Köhler, *Prophetismus*, p. 47.

(now his bodily eye is closed) only represents to him a basis for the development of his spiritual contemplation.<sup>1</sup>

The dwellings of Israel appear beautiful to Balaam in this state of spiritual contemplation; but it is here more appropriate to understand the word 'goodly' not in a literal, but in a spiritual sense. The tents of the Israelites could not have appeared 'goodly' to the bodily eye; they could not have been otherwise than worn out, unsightly, and soiled, after the long, difficult journey across the bare wilderness, and a life spent solely in spiritual labours. But by the light of the rapture which possessed him, the prophet saw them in the reflection of the holiness which overshadowed the tents of the chosen people, and dwelt in their midst in the ark of the Covenant of the Eternal Light.<sup>2</sup> Therefore he compares them to the most pleasing and beautiful of God's creations in the kingdom of nature; they are like moist valleys and shady groves, like happy oases in the midst of sandy plains and rocks, like havens of peace in the parched desert of unrighteousness and amidst the burning breath of the sinful passions of the surrounding world. 'Happy is the traveller who has reached this oasis, he will here find shade, coolness, and repose; happy is every member of this chosen people, for beneath the shadow of the Divine blessing he will find means of satisfying all his spiritual and bodily needs.'<sup>3</sup> The presence of God renders the blessed tents of Jacob like blossoming and fruitful gardens, *like a tree planted by the rivers of water* (Ps. i. 3). They fear neither drought nor storms, neither earthly calamities nor disasters; the fountain of spiritual energy supports in them the sap of life and gives them strength to resist life's tempest.<sup>4</sup> Like the aloe tree, planted by the Lord Himself, the dwellings of

<sup>1</sup> Hengstenberg, *Bil.* p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> See Bishop Vissarion (form. Archpriest Netchaëff), *Commentary on the Paremiæ*, p. 179, Moscow 1876 (Passages of the Old Testament read during the services of the Orthodox Church). Translator's note.

<sup>3</sup> *Commentary on the Paremiæ of Bishop Vissarion, the Archpriest Netchaëff*, p. 180.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

Israel exhale a perfume pleasing to God, and incline His ear to the prayers of His people.<sup>1</sup> Finally, they rise beautiful amongst the nations like the noble, majestic cedars of Lebanon, spreading their branches afar; under their shade dwells the chosen people with numerous cattle and servants. No nation can be compared with them for glory and multitude (cf. Ezek. xxxi. 3-9). From the seed of Israel will arise one who will become the Lord of many nations; He, the King of Israel, will surpass in power the terrible Gog, the king of the warlike northern nations,<sup>2</sup> and His kingdom will increase

<sup>1</sup> This figure of speech is particularly characteristic in the mouth of the Aramite Balaam. The aloe exhales a particularly pleasant aroma, and is therefore very much appreciated in the East (see Ol. Celsius in *Hieroz.* Part i. p. 133 and *sq.*, and Rosenmüller, *Schol. ad h. l.*). The aloe is a native of the East Indies, Siam, Cochin-China, and the Molucca isles (Gesen, *Thea.* p. 33; Rosenmüller, *Alttest.* iv. p. 225 *et seq.*). This tree does not grow in Arabia, and was probably brought by merchants to Mesopotamia. According to Celsius, an Eastern legend considers this tree to have grown in the garden of Eden, and the Belgians still call it the tree of Paradise; Michaelis thinks that Balaam's speech was an echo of this legend. In ancient times myrrh and aloes were considered precious perfumes (Prov. vii. 17; Ps. xlv. 8; John xix. 39, 40). Aloes and myrrh represent actually and symbolically the fragrance issuing from the Redeemer's garments. In a work on the agriculture of Nabeth, it is related, from the words of the Chaldeans, that if any one wishes to pronounce an incantation before the idol of a goddess, he must burn before it fragrant spices composed of myrrh, aloes, and incense, playing meanwhile, for some time, on a wind instrument, or striking a piece of aloe wood; he may then pronounce the desired incantation; the goddess will listen to him and fulfil his prayer (see D. Chwolson, *Monuments of the Ancient Babylonian Writings*, Russkiy Viestnik, 1859, p. 189).

<sup>2</sup> According to the testimony of the prophet Ezekiel (xxxviii. 2, 3, xxxix. 1-6), Gog, Hebrew גֹּג, Greek (Sept.) Γωγ, is the king of the land of Magog, מַגּוֹג, the prince, or, more correctly speaking, the leader (מֶלֶךְ, Septuagint ἀρχων, head ruler) of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. According to Gen. x. 2, the lands of Magog, Meshech, and Tubal were inhabited by the descendants of Japheth. The land of Rosh is not mentioned in this chapter. It is conjectured that a powerful federation of several nations was known under the name of Magog in the north-east of Europe. Josephus (*Antiq.* i. 6, 1), and after him St. Jerome, Isidor of Seville, and Zonaras called them the Scythians (known already to Homer and Hesiod), who, according to an ancient saying (*Diod. Sic.* ii. 43), occupied at first a part of Asia from the Arax to the Caucasus. A later tradition, which is mentioned in the Targum and Midrasch (1 Targ. i. and ii., to Gen. l.c., Frg. to Chron. i. 5, Midr. rab. to Gen. l.c.), says that the name of Magog meant the Sarmatians, who

and become glorious unto the ends of the earth. This will most certainly come to pass; for the Almighty Lord has victoriously delivered Israel from the grievous yoke of the powerful and until then unconquerable Egyptians, and gives the Israelites a splendid and terrible ornament, the invincible strength of the unicorn. Like the carnivorous lion, Israel destroys his enemies; he shall break their bones, take from them their prosperity and fertility as the spoils of war; and finally, as the sign of complete victory and the coming of perfect peace, he will lay down his arms, break his arrows.

After the victorious conclusion of the war he couches and stoops down, he has laid aside his terrible weapons, and lies down quietly, and out of danger, like the lion, king of animals; like the lioness, who jealously watches over her cubs. He is terrible in his peacefulness amongst the nations, and inspires

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proceeded from the fusion of the Scythians with the Medians, and the Slavonians, a northern nation which bears the name of Geths (see *Simosatha*, p. 119, *Ghotius Summar*. pp. 9, 14). The name of Gog was used later instead of Magog to designate the nation which had the supremacy over the tribes of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, which corresponds perfectly with what is known about the Scythians (Fürst, *Handw.*). Bochart's opinion that the land of Gog was situated near the Caucasus is founded on the fact that the inhabitants of Colchis and Armenia called the Caucasus Gog-hazan, the fortress of Gog. The word גֹּג is very much like the Ossetian Ghogh, Persian Koch (mountain), and evidently through repetition the words became Gog-gog, Koch-Koch, Caucasus, the first dwelling-place of the Scythian tribes (Fürst, *Handw.*). Delitzsch supposes the land of Rosh to have been identical with the land of Rosh (Mat-Ra-asi), on the borders of the Elam, near the Tigris (Schrader, *Keilinschr.* p. 427). According to other documents, the land of Rosh, Hebrew רוֹשׁ, was situated to the north of Palestine (Ezek. xxxviii. 14), near Meshech and Tubal (Hebrew מֶשֶׁךְ), and Meshech (or Mosch, Hebrew מֹשֶׁךְ), which, according to general opinion, formed the north of Armenia (Fürst; Schrader, *Keilinschriften*); these nations were identical with the tribes of Mosch and Taberan mentioned in Greek authors. The federation of all these nations is called Maksians on the Egyptian monuments (Brugsch, *Egypt*, p. 566), or Izakal, Pourokata, Shakalsha (p. 567). Assurbanipal, who lived a century before the prophet Ezekiel, describes his victory over the terrible Scythians, who lived in a mountainous country to the north of Assyria, and ordered the exploit to be immortalised by the following inscription: 'I have taken seventy-five fortified towns of Sarats and Paritza, the sons of Gogi (Gog), the sovereign of Tzaki (Scythians), who had thrown off my yoke. I have brought home my booty. I captured them



such fear that nobody will dare to rise against him and attack him. 'Balaam prophesies the time when Israel will be finally settled in the promised land; then he will lay aside his warlike sword, and each one will enjoy peace, sitting in the shade of his own vine and fig-tree. Such was the long and peaceful reign of Solomon. But Israel is terrible to his enemies even in times of peace; he is like the sleeping lion, or the young lion (whelp) which cannot be disturbed with impunity; he is terrible even in sleep. The patriarch Jacob prophesied the same concerning Judah and the tribe of Judah'<sup>1</sup> (Gen. xlix. 9). Finally, Israel is so pleasing to the Lord God of heaven and earth, the Source of all blessedness and chastisement, that every one who wishes well to Israel will be blessed by God, and every enemy will unfailingly bring upon himself the wrath of Jehovah. 'Those who wish well to Israel, who are his friends, will be blessed by

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alive and brought them to Nineveh, my capital' (Tzerkovniy Viestnik, 1893, No. 32, Article by N. G.). The Book of Ezekiel (xxxii. 26) tells us that Meshech and Tubal 'and all her multitude . . . caused their terror in the land of the living.' Gog is represented by Ezekiel as the leader of all the northern nations who inhabited the coasts of the Black and Caspian Seas, the people of Gomer or the Cimmerii, of Togarmah, Persia (Ezek. xxxviii. 5, 6). He comes forth with great armies (vers. 4, 7), ascends and comes like a storm, and is like a cloud to cover the land (ver. 9) from his place out of the north parts (ver. 15). It is evident that in the time of Ezekiel these nations were the terror of the inhabitants of Syria and Mesopotamia. They are represented in the same colours at a much earlier period in the Chronicles of the Egyptian Pharaoh, Rameses III. (in the beginning of the twelfth century B.C.). They came like locusts from their coasts and islands and spread over all the earth. Not a single nation could resist their invasion, beginning by the nations of Hita (people), Kadi (Galilee), Karchemish, Arathus, and Anus. They ravaged these countries and defeated a camp in the land of the Amorites (Brugsch, *Egypt*, p. 566; cf. Ezek. xxxviii. 11-13, xxxiv. 6). Thus the people of Gog represented a type (ideal) of political power from the deepest antiquity, and therefore Balaam had sufficient foundation to represent the superiority over Gog as the ideal destiny of the people of Israel.

<sup>1</sup> The Archpriest Netchaëff (Bishop Vissarion), *Commentary on the Parables*, p. 183. According to the explanation of naturalists, the lion can never lie in a solitary place; he always lies down at the place where the night has found him (Bochart, *Hieroz.* Part I. l.c. 2; Oppian, *de venat. leonis* 3 e. l. ap.). He seems to feel that nobody will dare to attack him in his sleep.

the Lord and will dwell under His special favour. The Lord will look upon them as devoted to Himself, because by loving and honouring His chosen people they will testify their reverence and devotion to the Lord Who has chosen him; but woe to the enemies of Israel, to those who curse him and call down upon him the wrath of God. They themselves will be doomed to the curse of the king of heaven as the enemies of His kingdom upon earth; they cannot curse with impunity those that belong to this kingdom, and must be prepared for the punishment they have merited from the God of Israel. History shows us how terrible was the Divine judgment which struck the enemies of Israel, the Egyptians, the Amalekites, the Assyrians, the Chaldeans, the Greeks, and the Romans.<sup>1</sup>

#### BALAAM'S FOURTH PARABLE

(Numbers xxiv. 10-19)

§ 6. A feeling of overpowering dejection must have evidently fallen upon Balak and his elders on hearing the above quoted parable—blessing. If the political condition of Israel had been represented in such prosperous terms in the two first parables as to leave but small hope of victory, the third must have seemed still more hopeless to the Moabites. Therefore, from the first words of this prophecy, a feeling of dissatisfaction had probably awakened in Balak's heart, which finally rose to furious wrath against the inspired and deeply affected magian soothsayer: '*And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times*' (ver. 10). '*Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour*' (ver. 11). Such being Balak's point of view, it was not difficult for Balaam to justify

<sup>1</sup> *Explanation of the Paremias*, pp. 183, 184, by Bishop Vissarion, formerly Archpriest V. Netchaëff.

himself; and in order to appease the king's wrath and restrain it within bounds, he turned to him fearlessly, perhaps not addressing a royal personage for the first time; and courageously, though with a marked feeling of sympathy, reminded Balak that all this had occurred almost against his own personal will, that he had first refused to follow Balak's messengers (xxii. 18), had indicated to the elders of Moab his entire dependence on the will of Jehovah in the matter of blessing or cursing, in the matter of causing good or harm to men. He had, therefore, not only found it impossible to accept the honour offered by the king; but even if Balak had given him his house full of silver and gold, he could not '*go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of his own mind*'<sup>1</sup> (ver. 13). The truth of this reminder softened the king's wrath. Balaam took advantage of the change; and moved by the still burning flame of inspiration, resolved to declare unto Balak in the form of a warning counsel what the people of Israel would do to the Moabites '*in the latter days*,' that is to say, in the distant future.<sup>2</sup> And although overwhelmed by the preceding, unwished for blessing of his enemies, the king of Moab was

<sup>1</sup> The expression 'to do either good or bad of my own mind' is transmitted differently in the Massoreth text, and, it would seem, more exactly, 'to make the lips of Jehovah good or evil to some one.' These words contain a suggestion of the ancient belief in the Almighty power of God concealed in the words of a blessing or curse.

<sup>2</sup> The text of the fourteenth verse requires several explanations: the Greco-Slavonic *eis tòn tópon mou*, Slavonic *ДО МѢСТА СВОЕГѠ* (to my place) is somewhat different from the generally adopted Massoreth text *יָמָי*, Russian *къ народу своему* (unto my people). In the Samaritan, Arabic, and Onkelos texts, and in the Vulgate, the reading is the same, therefore the different version of the Septuagint may be explained by a wish to retain the parallel between the eleventh and twenty-fifth verses. The Greco-Slavonic *συμβουλεύσω, πρὸς τὸν βασιλῆα* (I will advise), is transmitted in the Russian edition *возвѣщу тебѣ*. (I will declare unto thee), according to the Massoreth *אֶמְצָא*. The word *אֶמְצָא* means, properly speaking, 'to lean,' 'to insist,' 'to advise,' 'to give counsel' (1 Kings i. 12; Ps. xvi. 7). This signification is not, however, suitable in this passage. From the psycho-

drawn by curiosity to listen to the heavenly tidings concerning the future destiny of his people. Balaam, again filled with the flame of inspiration, fell into a state of ecstasy, and 'he took up his parable and said.

Ver. 15. '*Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said.*'

Ver. 16. '*He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High,<sup>1</sup> which saw the vision*

logical point of view it is quite comprehensible and natural that Balaam, being a soothsayer (not a prophet), was carried away by the images rising in his mind of the future connection between Israel and the Moabites, and he could not expose these prophetic events of the future otherwise than in the form of an advice, or a warning given in the interest of the Moabites. But, even as such, these unwelcome revelations could not have been otherwise than displeasing to the ears of Balak, and therefore the greater part of the biblicists transmit the word *yy* in the sense of communicating, warning, foretelling, on the authority of a parallel passage in Isa. xli. 28 (see De Geer, *Bil.* pp. 102, 103; Oort, p. 34; and Rosenmüller, *Schol. ad A. L.*). The transition from the notion 'to exhort,' 'to advise,' to that of 'foretelling the future,' is not difficult, as the prophets of Israel always announced the future in relation to some present condition (Oort, p. 34). 'Balaam is not in the least concerned about the feelings of the Moabite king; but he feels so compelled, so inspired by God, that he cannot go away before confessing and proclaiming that which he has received from above' (De Geer, *Bil.* p. 103); but, in order to console Balak, this will not take place soon, or to-morrow, but *בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים*, literally, 'at the end of these days.' This expression is interpreted differently. Gesenius (*Thea.*), Hengstenberg (*Bil.* pp. 158-160), and others, translate it 'at the end of the days,' in conformity with Onkelos and the Syriac and Arabic texts. In the Greco-Slavonic it is translated *ἐν ἔσχατον τῶν ἡμερῶν*, 'in the last days,' and in Russian *въ послѣдствіи времени*, (in the course of time). Judging by the cuneiform inscriptions, this formula was usual, and expressed, according to Schrader's opinion, 'the future time' (see *Keilinschr.* p. 153, I.B.M. xlix, 1). That this sentence is meant to express a distant future is expressed by the words of the seventeenth verse, 'not now' and 'not nigh.'

<sup>1</sup> The Greco-Slavonic *ἐπιστάμενος ἐπιστημὴν, οὐμῆα οὐμῆνίε*, (knowing the knowledge), means (1) according to the sense of the Hebrew text, 'to receive into the consciousness and to have the interior experience of all that appears and happens to the soul' (Gen. iii. 7; Prov. xxiii. 35); (2) to discern (sorrow) (e.g. Eccles. viii. 5), to learn wisdom (Prov. xxx. 3). In this case Balaam undoubtedly points to the effusion of the Almighty's Spirit which was shed upon him (Knob.), and the reading of the Massoreth text, as transmitted in the Russian edition of the Bible, '*who had the knowledge of the Almighty,*' seems the most appropriate interpretation.

of the Almighty, falling INTO A TRANCE, but having his eyes open.'

Ver. 17. 'I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The text of this remarkable verse has reached us in several different versions. The Greco-Slavonic translation is unsuccessful, whether from the difficulty of understanding the text, or for another reason, is unknown. Δεἶξω αὐτῷ, 'I will show him,' is evidently inappropriate, and has been probably caused by a mistake of the Septuagint through mixing the Hebrew word אָרָאֲנִי (kal רָאָה), which the ancient and modern commentators render as 'I see him,' with the form 'Hif'il,' which is very similar in outline (as generally in the verb רָאָה, Gesenius, *Gram.* § 75), and has a causal signification, namely, 'to enable somebody to see and (afterwards) to show something.' The appearance of the word μακαρίζω, 'I bless,' is explained by the Septuagint having mistaken the Hebrew word אֲשַׁנְּרֵנּוּ (from שָׁנָה, to contemplate) for the verb אֲשַׁבֵּר, 'to bless' (Gen. xxx. 13). The suffix נָנִי (him) refers naturally to the person named farther (Hengstenberg, *Bil.* pp. 164, 165). In the same manner the Hebrew קָרֹב כֵּן means, more exactly, 'not near' and not ἐγγίζει, 'approaches,' as in the Septuagint. The sentences עֲתָה קָרֹב and עֲתָה יִנָּצֵחַ are parallel and synonymous, and indicate a distant period (De Geer, p. 106). The word ἀνατελεῖ ἔσοσι ἀστὲρ, 'will shine,' according to the signification of the Hebrew דִּירָה (Gesenius, § 126, 4), would be better interpreted by the Russian word востанет (rises) as used in the Russian edition. In the fourth parallel line the Septuagint had probably in the copy of the Hebrew manuscript before them the word אָדָם, 'man,' instead of the generally adopted word שֵׁבֶט, 'sceptre, rod.' Amongst the ancient texts the Samaritan, the Arabic, the Vulgate, are analogous to the Massoreth text, while Onkelos and the Syriac text keep to the same version as the Septuagint. In this case it is evident that the latter is preferable to the Massoreth. (1) The verb קָם, 'rises,' is never used in the Old Testament, even in poetical figures of speech, to express the action of inanimate objects, and only refers to free reasonable beings (see Reinecci, *Konkor. Bibl.*), to God, angels, men. Also, the other predicates מַחֵה, 'smite,' and קָרַקַר, 'destroy,' seem to refer to the subject אָדָם, 'man.' In the parallel passage (Isa. xi. 1) the Septuagint renders the Hebrew word הַמֶּךָ (sceptre, rod) by ῥάβδος, and in this case the predicate is יָצָא, and not קָם. (2) In the Massoreth text the vision is represented in such a manner that with the star, or in the star itself, appears a sceptre (or, in an enlarged form, a pillar), which smites, or, would it not have

been more appropriate to say, falls, upon the princes of Moab and destroys (pulls out by the roots) the sons of Syth or Sheth. Such a picture is impossible. For this reason the commentator Swavingius observes that the mingling of imagery in the hymns of Balaam is not always sufficiently correct and beautiful, although he recognises the authenticity of שֶׁבֶט (De Geer,

p. 59). It is, on the contrary, much more probable to admit that a star had suddenly appeared over the Israelites' camp on the seer's ecstatic horizon of vision, which, as it moved nearer to the contemplator, took the form of a luminous, light-bearing starlike figure, moving in the direction of Moab and the sons of Sheth to pronounce judgment on them. He rises from the bosom of Israel like a shining apparition, and like a royal giant steps forth on the stage of history. The following line describes the action of this resplendent man, 'He smites the princes of Moab,' Hebrew יִקְרַח פְּאֵתֵי מוֹאָב. The word

יִקְרַח, as already said, has in general the signification of the Greek word *θραύω*, 'to break,' 'to crush,' 'to destroy.' Symmachus renders this word by *παύσει*, Syrian, 'to smite,' 'to subdue' (cf. Ps. xviii. 39; Deut. xxxiii. 11). The word פְּאֵתֵי must be considered in this case as a mutilated form of the original פְּהוֹתֵי. The word פְּאֵתֵי here calls forth insurmountable difficulties

here. The word פְּאֵת signifies, according to the opinion of some interpreters, 'waving,' 'wind,' 'side'; and, in the actual case, as if it were the side of the beard or whiskers (De Geer, p. 107; Oort, 37); or, more exactly, both sides of the face (Fürst, *Handw.*), or, in a figurative sense, 'limits' (Hengstenberg, *Bil.*). However, none of these interpretations give the sense of the context, nor can they be justified from the point of view of the following parallel line: וְיִקְרַח כָּל בְּנֵי שֵׁת, 'and will make captive all the sons of

Scyth.' The Septuagint translated ἀρχηγούς, evidently having in view the word פְּהוֹת from פְּהָה, as in the Syriac and Onkelos texts (Sanskrit 'pakscha,' comrade, friend of the king, leader, prince), leaders, princes. The mistake of the Massoreths is easily explained by the fact that the guttural letters א and ה may be easily mixed in the pronunciation and even in the reading by a similarity in the form of the ancient writing. Therefore, א stands instead of ה in 2 Kings xvii. 21, and many other examples may be found in Bochart, *Hieroicoikon*, P. 1, ch. ii. p. 7. The inappropriateness of the word פְּאֵתֵי is here evident. On the contrary, the word פְּהוֹת,

'captains, rulers,' is quite appropriate, not only in the present case, but also generally as the word פְּהָה, 'captain, chief, prince,' was used in preference in the Assyrian, Median, Chaldean, and Persian kingdoms (2 Kings xviii. 24; Ezek. xxiii. 6; Esth. viii. 9, ix. 3; Dan. iii. 2; see Fürst and Steinberg).

The following action of the light-bearing man before the spiritual vision of the seer is וְיִקְרַח כָּל בְּנֵי שֵׁת, according to the translation of the Septuagint καὶ προνομήσει πάντας υἱοὺς Σήθ, in Slavonic И ПЛѢНІТЪ ВСА СЫНѢ ГИДДЕМЪ, and takes captive all sons of Sheth. The word קרַח is considered doubtful both by its form and signification. Western commentators here see the form 'Pi' from קִיךְ, 'to dig,' 'to deepen,' and translate it by the word

'he uproots' (Fürst, Steinberg, Reinke in *Beiträge* H. V., p. 248). Others (Oort, pp. 36, 37; De Geer, p. 109) do not agree with this interpretation, and suppose that קרקר stands here for 'devour' (as in the parallel passage of Jer. xlviii. 45), or 'will burn' (as in the Greco-Slavonic text). It is, however; more probable to suppose קרקר as derived from קרר, 'to turn,' 'to plait,' 'to interweave,' 'to bind' (from thence proceeds קור, 'yarn,' 'thread,' 'cobweb' (Isa. lix. 5, 6). This meaning was adopted by the ancient interpreters. Symmachus translates this word, judging by the Hexapla of Origen, ἐπευρήσει, as 'will look after, preserve, watch over.' The Syriac interprets it in the sense of 'to subject, to put a yoke, to condemn to a painful labour.' The interpretation of the Septuagint is in this case still closer to this, as the word is here translated by προνομήσει, which means literally 'will take prisoners in order to reserve them for the future' (cf. προέμω). The parallel passage will thus be found in 2 Peter ii. 4: 'For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment'; and ver. 9: 'The Lord knoweth how . . . to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.' This signification of קרקר is justified and amplified by בְּנֵי שֵׁת. Since the time of the first rabbi, many Christian

interpreters considered the word שֵׁת as designating the patriarch Sheth, and the whole of mankind was understood under the name of 'sons of Sheth,' as descendants from Sheth by Noah. But this interpretation has long been regarded as inappropriate, and '*St. Ephraim the Syrian considered there was foundation for seeing in these words an indication of the plundering heathen nations, who were neighbours of Israel.*' In later times another version became prevalent in the west, viz. that שֵׁת means, in this case, the same as מִצָּרִים in Lam. iii. 47; Ps. lxxiv. 23, i.e. desolation, tumult, noise, cry of war (see Hengstenberg, *Bil.* pp. 174, 175; Oort, p. 38; De Geer, pp. 110, 111), and בְּנֵי שֵׁת means '*the sons of rebellion.*' It refers

not only to the Moabites, but also to other neighbouring nations inclined to war and pillage, who caused injury to the Israelites (De Geer, p. 111). But if it is to be admitted that the Hebrew word שֵׁת has been correctly interpreted by the Septuagint as Σῆθ, it may be also supposed that they might translate by the letter Σ the Hebrew ש, and not שׁ, that is, they read שֵׁת. If the patriarch Seth (Gen. iv. 25) is understood by this word, and the expression 'all the sons of Seth' is meant to express all (the chosen) mankind, then the sentence 'crushes all the sons of Seth' would be in direct opposition to the fundamental teaching of the Christian faith that Messiah will come for the salvation (and not for the destruction) of the chosen (men). If the expression בְּנֵי שֵׁת כָּל is to be referred, according to St. Ephraim the Syrian,

to the plundering neighbours of the Israelites, this interpretation will agree better with the preceding parallel line, 'shall smite the princes of Moab,' and is fully corroborated by the Egyptian documents. The name of the god Seth is frequently mentioned in the Egyptian chronicles, particularly in the exorcisms, and according to the notions of the Egyptians: 'Set was the personification of every evil in nature; he was the god of confusion and disorder, of battles and violence; all the destructive elements, the wild beasts, the poisonous serpents, obeyed his commands' (Lenorm. *Magie*, p. 97, and

Ver. 18. '*And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly.*'<sup>1</sup>

Ver. 19. '*Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.*'<sup>2</sup>

This prophetic parable differs from the preceding in a double respect. In the first one, Balaam represented the peculiar position of Israel amongst other nations, its numerousness and happy righteousness (xxiii. 9, 10), the absence of predominating physical and moral evil, the beneficent, saving, tutelary presence of the Lord amongst His people, on which depends their terrible power (vers. 21, 24), the spiritual beauty of their life,

101). He was the origin of all evil, and was hostile to all good in the visible and invisible world. He was the enemy of light and the antagonist of virtue. The origin of this divinity was Chaldean, and was known in 'anterior Asia' under the name of Baal Sutech (Lenorm. *Magie*, p. 89; Brugsch, *Egypt*, pp. 244, 245; Scholz, *Goetzendienst*, pp. 27, 142, 151, 153). It became known in Egypt during the reign of the foreign Hiksos kings, and some of the kings of the nineteenth dynasty (e.g. Mamen, Ra, Minepta i.) were called Seti, that is to say, belonging to (god) Set, or the partisans of Set (Brugsch, *Egypt*, pp. 244, 247, 248). Therefore, in the eyes of Balaam and Moses, the expression בְּנֵי שֵׁט, sons of Set, meant worshippers of the god of evil, and indicated a tumultuous gathering of godless nations, and in particular the contemporary turbulent tribes of Canaan. Accordingly, the correct interpretation of this verse would be as follows: '*I see Him, but not yet now; I contemplate Him, but not near; a star rises from Jacob, and a man rises from Israel and crushes the princes of Moab and subjects the sons of Set (the evil one).*'

<sup>1</sup> This verse is also interpreted in several ways. Instead of שֵׁעִיר, Seir, the Septuagint and the Samaritan text have עֵשָׂו, 'Esau', but the sense does not diverge from the Massoreth text, as the descendants of Esau inhabited the mountainous country called Seir. Instead of reading as the Massoreths אֹיְבָיו, 'his enemies,' the Septuagint undoubtedly read Αἰνῖον, ἐχθρὸς αὐτοῦ, that is to say, 'the ideal representant of Israel, the Messiah' (Hengstenberg, Ewald, *Jahrbücher*, and De Geer, pp. 111, 112). The Greco-Slavonic ἐποίησεν ἐν ἰσχύϊ σὺν τοῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ κτισμένοι, (created a fortress) corresponds to the Hebrew עָשָׂה הֵיל, which means 'grows,' more exactly (according to Gesenius, § 134, 26) 'grows in strength' (De Geer, p. 112), 'will create,' 'acquire strength' (Hengsten., *Bil.* pp. 185, 186); 'do valiantly' (Ps. lx. 12).

<sup>2</sup> According to the acknowledgment of Oort (p. 39), the nineteenth verse represents by its lexicological difficulty '*revera crux interpretum.*' The usually adopted Massoretha text reads יֵרֵד מִיַּעֲקֹב וְהָאֱבֶר שָׂרִיר מֵעֵיר, and therefore



their political and military superiority over all the nations through one of their descendants, and their final complete triumph over their enemies, ending in perfect peace (xxiv. 5-9). The last hymn is the expression of the highest degree of inspiration, the transition from the general to the particular, from the ideal to its fulfilment, with regard to the individual typical enemies of the chosen people. At first Balaam depicted the fate of Israel through the whole expanse of its historical life, now he has in view its final stadium, the end of the days, the remoteness of coming ages. He began by showing the mysterious conqueror and peacemaker under the

יִרְךָ is interpreted in the sense of יָרַךְ, 'to govern,' 'to rule' (De Geer, p. 112), 'to take possession' (as in the Holy Russian Synod's edition of the Bible); or the word is derived from יָרָה, 'to rise in war' (cf. Judg. v. 12; Onkelos, Syr., Ps. Jonath.). But none of these notions agrees with מִעֵקֶב, 'from Jacob,' so that some interpreters have even found it necessary to add the word 'proceeding,' as has been done in the Vienna text and in the Russian edition of the Synod, and this addition proves the necessity of another reading. In the version of the Septuagint the word ἐξερχομένη has been taken to express the word יַעוֹר (Nif, derived from יָעַר), which is used in several passages (Jer. vi. 22, xxv. 32; Zech. iv. 1) in the sense of (waking, rising), rising with energy, rising in insurrection. The original יַעוֹר being replaced, instead of the distorted יִרְךָ, gives a determinate signification to the sentence. In Jer. vi. 12 this word is used in speaking of the great northern nation appointed for the punishment of the unrighteous sons of Zion, and in xxv. 32 it is used to mention the great whirlwind which is the symbol of the Lord's destroying wrath on the day of final judgment over the nations (see vers. 30, 31, 33 of the same chapter). This passage explains what is meant under מִעֵרִי שְׂרִיר. By the word שְׂרִיר is meant 'the remains,' especially of a defeated army (Jer. xxx. 2), or 'fugitives' (as in the Arabian text). By 'city,' according to Ps. lix. 6, are meant cities in general (Oort, p. 40; De Geer, p. 112). Onkelos transmits the expression 'out of the city,' as 'from the kingdom of the heathens.' In the Arabian and Samaritan texts it is simply 'out of the kingdom.' It is to be supposed that the Septuagint also meant kingdom or state by the word πῶλις. We may find concrete examples of such entire destructions of towns and kingdoms in the Bible (Deut. ii. 34; Joshua x. 28, 30, 36, 37), and in the military chronicles of the Egyptian and Assyrian kings (see Astafiev, *Antiquities of Babylon and Assyria*, pp. 72-75). This is the poetical representation of the terrible battle which the Lord fought at first with Sion (Ewald, *Jahrbücher*), and then with the great city which reigns over the kings of the earth, and is the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth (Rev. xvii. 5, 18).

typical features of the victorious king of the northern nations (see note to the seventh verse of chap. xxiv.); in the conclusion he makes use of higher symbols to represent the victor of Israel's enemies. The Moabites come first amongst them, as their attempt to lay hands on the Israelites was the primary cause of Balaam's declaring their superiority over other nations; and, in the opening words of his prophecy, Balaam says: '*Come, therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.*' However, he does not stop at the Moabites, but as a slight consolation to Balak prophesies a like destiny to the other nations hostile to the Israelites (they are all fully enumerated), and to all those who will rise against them in the future.<sup>1</sup>

Like every strong feeling, this clearer and more precise inspiration is poured forth with a certain similarity of form. The heavenly inspiration fills Balaam's heart with such rapture that he cannot restrain himself from again confessing the priceless joy of his prophetic ecstasy. As before, in verses 3, 4, he bears witness that he sees nothing earthly, but is filled with the knowledge of the Most High, Who unfolds to him the future of the nations. The boundless, wonderful, unending picture of the spiritual life of the world unrolls itself before his spiritual eye, and on the distant horizon,<sup>2</sup> by the tents of the Israelites, in the mists of the far distance, the Mesopotamian soothsayer sees the appearance of Him Who is to come into the world. This sight transports him into a state

<sup>1</sup> Hengstenberg, *Bil.* p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> The expression 'at the end of the days' here means, as in other passages, the period when the hopes and promises of the present will be fulfilled. It indicates, as Hewernik has well expressed it, 'the horizon of prophetic prediction.' The 'end of the days' begins when the hopes which have not been fulfilled and have remained in embryo are drawing near to their actuality and accomplishment, therefore its beginning is not the same for all periods and stadia in the history of salvation. On the contrary, it recedes farther in proportion as its realisation is lost in the fleeting distance. From the point of view of Jacob, whose horizon of hope and prophecy was the dwelling of his descendants in the promised land, 'the end of days' began

of enraptured amazement; he cannot even distinctly realise Who has appeared to him. He has only the presentiment of His Divine origin, and follows Him in His mysterious march. He sees only 'Him, the descendant of Jacob, the ideal David' (Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24), and the confused feeling that 'He' is yet beyond time and space makes the words come forth in rapid tones from Balaam's lips—'not now,' 'not nigh.' In fact, according to the general belief current in Mesopotamia, the Deity (and all the immaterial inhabitants of heaven) were represented under the form of a resplendent star. Balaam had probably been imbued with these ideas from childhood, and it would have been difficult for him to express his inspired thoughts otherwise than by images suitable to the notions of the period. The prophet takes the types of the future from what is actually known to him in the present (Reinke, *Beiträge*, iv. p. 256). By the ancient belief of the Mesopotamians, Divinity chiefly manifested itself under the form of stars (Lenorm., *Magie*, p. 112). The Supreme Being, the only Author of all that exists, Hū (Assyrian), the only One, the element of Good, is called sometimes in Akkadian Anū (Lenorm. p. 113). The ancient hieroglyphic which expressed in the Akkadian language the notion of God represents the simple figure of a star (p. 167); therefore, according to the point of view of Balaam's contemporaries, the words 'star,' 'an,' 'Divinity,' 'anna,' were synonymous (Lenorm. p. 326). The same representation was preserved in the Egyptian chronicles (see Knobel, *Horapolo*, i. 13, ii. 1; Scholz, *Goetzendienst*, pp. 274, 278).

when this hope was realised, therefore about the time of Joshua. For Balaam and Moses, 'though the fulfilment of the presentment' and prophecy of Jacob was fulfilled before their eyes, yet the end of days was still concealed in the darkness of the future, for the hostile disposition of the surrounding nations made it evident that the possession of the promised land was no guarantee of peace, and that the struggle was yet far from its conclusion. Peace would only reign, then, when all obstacles had been removed and the hostile nations conquered and destroyed. Figuratively speaking, this would begin in the time of David (Kurtz, *Gesch.* ii. pp. 496, 497).

There is no doubt that Balaam received the Divine Revelation of the appearance of a Deliverer under the form of a star 'come out of Jacob,' in accordance with this belief and no other, for the passage does not refer to the star which preceded the appearance of the Saviour, but of the Deliverer Himself (Oort, p. 36). Finally, the Messiah Himself calls Himself 'Light' (John viii. 12), and more precisely 'the Bright and Morning Star' (Rev. xxii. 16).<sup>1</sup> But Balaam had never before received such a Divine Revelation, and had therefore never had occasion to observe by experience the correspondence of this ancient and dogmatic belief of the magians with the reality. Now he sees it confirmed; from the midst of Israel's tents arises a luminous star; and, as it approaches, the outline of a human form, clad in the brilliant rays of the star, becomes visible to the spiritual eye of the soothsayer. What can be more wonderful! And this prototype of David (cf. 2 Sam. xxi. 17), this mysterious light-bearing God in human form (cf. Rev. xxii. 16), crushes (unto death) the princes of Moab, and subdues the destructive impulses of the turbulent sons of the wicked, murderous Sheth (2 Sam. viii.), and amongst them the people of Edom, who were the first to injure Israel in the person of the Amalekites (Exod. xvii.; Deut. xxv. 17-19). They embodied more than other nations the attribute of the spirit of evil, of deathly strife and sedition;<sup>2</sup> and this

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<sup>1</sup> The ancient interpreters (Rosenmüller, *Scholias*) considered the star to have been a comet, which signifies a king, according to the belief of the Eastern and many ancient nations. The appearance of a comet was considered an augury of great political changes or of the accession to the throne of some remarkable sovereign. This is a mutilation of the ancient Akkadian and Chaldean faith.

<sup>2</sup> The inhabitants of Edom (Egyptian, Shassu) are represented in the Egyptian chronicles as a robber tribe. They led a nomad life (Brugsch, *Egypt*, p. 254). The military chronicles of Rameses II. mention 'the leader of the hostile armies of Shassu' (Brugsch, p. 570). The country of Edom and the mountains of Seir were the native land of the chief tribes of Shassu. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries B.C. they left their mountains to attack Egypt with their armed forces. They also tried to penetrate into the country peacefully with their herds and obtain pasture for their cattle

people of Edom, hostile to Israel and to its ideal Lord, will be punished for its enmity and given over for ever into bondage to other nations; while Israel in the person of his coming starlike and radiant Lord<sup>1</sup> will appear as an invincible spiritual fortress, whose power will spread afar. At the appointed time this radiant Conqueror 'out of Jacob' will rise from his state of rest, and will give over to destruction all those who think to save themselves from his righteous vengeance by flight from the ruined city.

## BALAAM'S LAST THREE PARABLES

(Numbers xxiv. 20-24)

§ 7. Such was the destiny awaiting the distant descendants of Moab and the worshippers of Sheth (Satan). But Balak could say nothing in answer, he stood in dumb amazement before this surprising manifestation of supernatural foresight, and his

in the rich meadows of Sukkoth (Brugsch, p. 231). It is said in the Egyptian inscriptions of that period that they sat '*like the foxes in their holes in the rocky mountains of Edom.*' They were the Bedouins of ancient times, the enemies of Egypt and of every traveller (Brugsch, p. 283). These tribes of Shassu were the allies of the Syrians in the wars against Egypt (Brugsch, p. 243). According to the opinion of Brugsch, who quotes the authority of Manetho, the powerful Hiksos, who reigned over Egypt, belonged to the tribes of Shassu (*Egypt*, pp. 238-241). After having been expelled from Egypt in the middle of the fifteenth century B.C. (by Amasis, first king of the eighteenth dynasty), one part of the Hiksos, or Han Shassu, founded in the end of the sixteenth century B.C. the Arabian or Canaanite dynasty in Chaldea, under the leadership of Nimrod (D. Chwolson, *Monuments of Ancient Manuscripts*, Russkiy Vestnik, May 11, 1859, pp. 183, 196-204). Balaam, as an inhabitant of distant Mesopotamia, naturally comprehended under the name of the people of Edom all the tribes known in Egypt under the name of Shassu; the more so that the descendants of Esau (Edom), being a warlike tribe, may have been mixed up with the other tribes of Bedouins. Therefore, it is evident that under the name of Edom are understood all the warlike tribes who lived to the south of the Dead Sea, and amongst them the Amalekites (Exod. xvii.; Deut. xxv. 17-19), who will be mentioned later more circumstantially.

<sup>1</sup> This was a feeble reflection of the glory and light which the Lord showed His chosen disciples on Mount Tabor (Luke ix. 29-34), and to His beloved apostle on the way to Damascus (Acts ix. 3-9, xxii. 6-11).

thoughts were riveted to the wonderful vision before him. Meanwhile Balaam had not yet returned to his normal frame of mind. Like the slowly fading rays of the setting sun, his inspiration was not suddenly extinguished, but by degrees the darkness of his usual condition already arose in his soul, and seemed to absorb the heavenly light which had descended upon his soul. Like summer lightnings at eventide, it yet flashed three times in Balaam's soul, and in its rays the Mesopotamian magian saw the fate of the nations contiguous to Israel, Moab and Edom, that of the Amalekites, Kenites, Assyrians, and Scythians, and he sealed these last sparks of inspiration in the three following prophecies:—

Ver. 20. *'And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever.'*<sup>1</sup>

Ver. 21. *'And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwelling-place, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock.'*

Ver. 22. *'Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted, until Asshur shall carry thee away captive.'*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The last line of this verse has different versions; the generally adopted Massoreth text is, וְאַחֲרֵיתוֹ עֲרִי אֲבֹד, and means 'but his end will rush to one who is perishing.' The reading of the Septuagint is different: וְאַחֲרֵיתָהֶם יֵאָבֵד, καὶ τὸ σπέρμα αὐτῶν ἀπολείται, or as (in the Syr., Onkelos) in the Samaritan וְאַחֲרֵיתוֹ עֲרִי יֵאָבֵד, 'but their posterity will perish for ever.' This reading is evidently better than the Massoreth; it is more comprehensible, and Michaelis gives it the preference for its clearness and its philological naturalness (*Bibl. Orient. Nov.* Part v. p. 216). As to the word אַחֲרֵית, its literal meaning, 'end,' is quite unsuitable, and does not agree with the concrete predicate 'to perish' (Oort, p. 140), nor with the poetical construction of the sentence. As the word רֵאשִׁית (beginning) is used in the metaphorical sense, so does its contrary אַחֲרֵית here signify 'posterity,' as in Num. xxiii. 10 in the ancient Samaritan, Syrian, and Onkelos texts.

<sup>2</sup> The last lines of verses 21, 22, are translated in several ways, and none of them are quite satisfactory. It is evident that in the Massoreth version the text is mutilated by the copyist: וְשֵׁם בְּסֻלֶּעַ קִנָּה בִּי אִם-יְהִי לְבָעֵר קִין עַד-כֹּה אֲשׁוּר תִּשְׁבֶּד: *'on the rock thou puttest thy nest, for if Cain will*

Ver. 23. 'And he took up his parable, and said, Alas! who shall live when God doeth this!' <sup>1</sup>

*be destroyed (?) is it long until Asshur shall lead thee away (?) into bondage ?'* None of the exegetists have exactly determined the meaning of the words שִׁים עֵרְמָה כִּיאֵם (see Hengstenberg, *Bil.* p. 194; De Geer, *Diss.* p. 121; Gesen. *Theas.* p. 682; Oort, pp. 42, 43). The Alexandrian scientists evidently read instead of בְּעִיר, 'in town,' פֶּעַר, 'Beor or Peor' (proper name); קֵן, 'nests,' instead of קַיִן, 'Cain'; עֵרְמָה, 'cunning,' instead of עֵרְמָה, 'till when'; therefore the whole sentence was read: וְאֵם שְׂמָתָּ בְּסִלְעַ קֶנֶד וְאֵם יְהִיָּה בְּעִירָו עֵרְמָה אֲשׁוּר תִּשְׁבֵּד. Its signification, according to Rosenmüller, is: 'If thou puttest thy nest on the rock, and this rock will become for the leader of the Kenites the nest of cunning, that is to say, a dwelling in which he can slyly conceal himself, still the Assyrians will make thee captive.' Hubigantius joins עֵרְמָה with אֲשׁוּר together, which gives the following sense: 'Thou sittest in rocky fortifications in which thou hopest to be inaccessible; but if thou art not conquered by the strength, thou shalt be conquered by the cunning of the Assyrians who will lead thee away captive' (see Rosenmüll. *Scholia*). But we think that it will be more in accordance with the text of the Septuagint to translate this sentence thus: 'Even if thou puttest thy nest on the rock, and even if in the city (fortress) there will be a nest (fledgling) of cunning, Asshur will lead thee away captive.' This reading harmonises with the poetical rhythm of Balaam's parables, and it removes the Massoreth inexplicable ambiguity of the suffix ך in the word תִּשְׁבֵּד. It is useless to enter into an explanation as to who is to be led away captive, Israel or the Kenites, for it is quite clear that the prophecy refers to the Kenites, therefore the true version of the twenty-first verse should be: 'And he saw the Kenites, and he pronounced his parable, and said: Thy dwelling is strong; but even if thou placest thy nest on the rock; and if in the fortress will be the nest of cunning, still Asshur will lead thee away captive.'

<sup>1</sup> This verse has also reached us in several versions of the Pentateuch. In the text of the Septuagint there is in the first line the expression: *kai lδov rδr 'Oγ* (or Γῶγ), which has no corresponding expression in the Massoreth text (or וְיָרָא אֶת עֹנִי נֹנִי). Evidently this difference proceeds from an inaccuracy of the Massoreth reading; the correctness of the Septuagint is justified by the form of the preceding parables (vers. 20, 21) and by the sense of the following text. In the reading of the Septuagint, in the twenty-fourth verse the word עֹנִי (or נֹנִי) forms a necessary and appropriate logical subject; in the Massoreth reading the subject fails, if we do not take as such the dubious וְיָצִים; but, in this case, the attribute will be missing. Further, the material and spiritual contemplation of the future forms the exclusive motive and condition of the prophecies contained in the whole of this narrative (cf. xxii. 41, xxiii. 13, xxiv. 2, 20), and, in the latter, if we exclude 'seeing Og' (Gog), the parable has no motive, and is void of the necessary outward condition. Some Western men of science, such as Geiger (*Geiger*, ii. 367,

Ver. 24. 'And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish for ever.'<sup>1</sup>

quoted by Oort, p. 43) admit the historical probability of this sentence existing in the most ancient Hebrew copies. It must be added that, by analogy with the twentieth and twenty-first verses, we should take the word כִּנָּן (name of the king) as the already mentioned (xxiv. 7) כִּנָּן, name of a great nation well known in ancient times; besides this, the Septuagint read כִּנָּן twice. The fact of the mutilation of this verse in the Massoreth text is confirmed by מִשְׁמֹנִי אֵל, instead of which the Septuagint probably read אֵל שְׁמוֹ אֵל (Gesenius, *Gram.* § 124, 4), *ὅταν θεῷ ταῦτα ὁ θεός*, 'when God will accomplish this.' The expression מִשְׁמֹנִי אֵל means literally 'from the time of determination God,' or 'when God will decree this' (nearly all the ancient and modern commentators), or 'who, except this terrible enemy' (Oort, pp. 44, 45). This difficulty is not set aside by the explanation of De Geer of מִן in the sense of 'propter,' 'in consequence of' (*Bil.* p. 124), or by other explanations exposed by Rosenmüller in *Scholia*. Thus the original reading of this part of the twenty-third verse is that of the Septuagint, which agrees with the Onkelos, Syriac, and Arabic texts. The sense of the whole verse is as follows: 'The prophet expresses a sorrowful apprehension for the life of men and people during the time of the accomplishment of the Divine decree concerning certain deeds of Gog; therefore the twenty-third verse should have been rendered more exactly as follows: 'And he saw Gog, and pronounced his parable, and said, Woe, woe! who will be spared when God does it?'

<sup>1</sup> This verse has also reached us in a mutilated form, and its sense is obscure, especially as the prophetic idea refers to the distant future under the cover of ancient events. In the Massoreth text the reading of the first line is מִן כִּנָּן מִן כִּנָּן which it is agreed to translate 'ships from the side of Chittim' (the attribute 'shall come' is understood and (ΠΡΟΕΛΘΕ) added in the Russian translation of the Synod). מִן כִּנָּן is interpreted as the plural of כִּנָּן, 'ship,' although the application of this word and its radical derivation remain until now doubtful (Michael. *Suppl.* p. 2085); therefore it has been long since conjectured that מִן כִּנָּן is a mutilation of a certain verbal form יָצָא, 'to come out' (as the Septuagint read, according to the conjecture of Rosenmüller, יָצָאוּ translating by *καὶ ἐξελεύσονται ἐκ χειρῶν Κιτιαίων*). The Samaritan text uses יָצָאוּ, and the commentator renders it in the sense of 'coming out of the hands of the Chittimites.' The traces of this reading are also retained in several Hebrew codices in the forms יָצָאוּ and יָצָאוּ; Onkelos, 'will be soon sent from the land of the Chittimites.' This is also a suggestion of the form יָצָאוּ. This reading is recognised by Michaelis in the *Bibl. Orient. Nov.* Part v. pp. 216-218, and Datius (Rosenmüller, *Scholia*); therefore the original reading is to be found in the Septuagint. It must also be added that in the Alexandrian Codex of Tischendorf, ἐξελεύσεται stands instead of ἐξελεύσονται, and the commentator of the Samaritan יָצָאוּ, *exire*



In these last prophecies we hear the short, broken exclamations of a man whom the Divine Spirit has carried away into the most distant times. Bloody wars and terrible defeats pass before his mind's eye, and he sees in the distant mist of ages the woes called forth by the conflict of nations; it even seems to him that he sees Mesopotamia, his own native land, and the surrounding country devastated with fire and sword by a strange people. The prospect of these disasters overwhelms him with such terror that he trembles beneath the shock and exclaims, 'Alas! who shall live when God doeth this?' Thus it was God's will that he, who came to curse Israel, was the one appointed to foretell the retribution awaiting not only the present, but even the future enemies of Israel, and even his own native land.<sup>1</sup> The Amalekites were the first amongst the heathen nations who rose in hostility against the chosen people.<sup>2</sup> They represent the beginning, the type and

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*eos fecit* (in Rosenmüller, *Scholia*, and Walton, *Bibl. Polygl.*) suggests that in several ancient editions stands הוציאם (hifil)—'he (Gog, cf. ver. 23) will lead them out' (his people). The authenticity of such a reading seems indubitable, especially in the parallel passages of Ezek. xxxviii. the invasion of Gog is represented as the work (permission) of God: '*Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; and I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company . . .*' (vers. 3, 4; cf. vers. 7, 8, xxxix. 2). Finally, the last line of this verse is also differently interpreted in different versions. In the generally adopted Massoreth text is written וְנָם הוּא עָרִי אֲבֵר, 'he himself to the perishing,' while in the Septuagint it is *καὶ αὐτοὶ ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἀπολοῦνται*, which means וְנָם הוּא עָרִי אֲבֵר. That וְנָם must stand here and not הוּא is confirmed by the plural of the attributes וְעָנִי, which requires a subject in the plural number. The pronoun וְנָם is supposed to exist in all the ancient translations; therefore, according to the original reading of the Septuagint, the twenty-fourth verse should be read: '*He will lead them out of Chittim, and they will subdue Asshur and subdue Eber, but themselves will perish (together) with them.*'

<sup>1</sup> De Geer, *Bil.* pp. 126, 127.

<sup>2</sup> The Amalekites were a robber tribe of Bedouins inhabiting Arabia Petraea to the south of Palestine up to the Sinaitic mountains between Egypt, the lands of the Philistines, the Amorites, the Idumeans, and the Midianites (Gen. xiv. 7; Exod. xvii. 8; Num. xiii. 29; Judg. vi. 3; 1 Sam. xv. 7,

image<sup>1</sup> of the heathens attacking the chosen people, and for this reason the posterity of Amalek and that of all similar nations are condemned to destruction. The clever and crafty Kenites,

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xxvii. 8). In the generations of Noah (Gen. x.) they are not named, but in the Book of Genesis (xxxvi. 16, 22) and in the First Book of Chronicles (i. 36) Amalek is mentioned as the grandson of Esau (Edom). These descendants of Edom were the first to attack the Israelites after their departure from Egypt (Exod. xvii. 8-16). Concerning their descent from Edom in detail, see Kurtz, *Gesch. des Alt. B.*, ii. pp. 240-242. As the Idumæan Shassu and Hiksos are names belonging to the roving Arabian robber tribes, as the Amalekites are descendants of Esau—Edom belonged to the same tribes—and as the Arabian writers give the name of Amalekites to the Hiksos who at one time reigned in Egypt (Brugsch, *Egypt*, p. 241), and to the Chaldeans in Balaam's time, in Balaam's mouth all the tribes of Shassu are meant under the name of Amalekites. Rawlinson fixes the reign of the Arabian dynasty in Chaldea from 1546 to 1300 B.C. (see Brugsch, *Egypt*, p. 303, note). Notions of the Amalekites' power at the time of the departure from Egypt are given in the Book of Judges (i. 14, xii. 15) and in the Book of Numbers (xiii. 29, xiv. 43). (Cf. Oort, p. 94.)

<sup>1</sup> Amalek, in this case, is called the 'first,' or the beginning, as the first who had begun war with the people of God, and is the prototype of the heathen's enmity to the kingdom of God. This interpretation is doubtless to be preferred to that where ראשית (Septuagint) ἀρχή, beginning, is supposed to designate the antiquity of the Amalekites (Rosenmüller, De Geer, Ewald, Lengerke). Hengstenberg in his *Beiträge* (vol. iii. p. 304) also refers this expression to the fact that the Amalekites were the first heathens who attacked Israel; but later he changed his opinion (see *Bil.* p. 188, u. f.) because גוים does not simply signify nations, but nations in contrast to Israel, therefore heathen nations, though not in enmity with Israel, although the interpretation might be thus understood. For this reason he afterwards maintained the opinion that Amalek is called 'the first of the nations' in the sense of superiority, power, and grandeur. Without doubt the word ראשית may be used in this sense; however, the first interpretation of Hengstenberg corresponds better to the sense of the prophecy cited. The expression ראשית גוים stands in evident opposition to אהרית הימים in the fourteenth verse, which forms the prominent feature of the whole prophecy. Therefore, if אהרית ('end') means in the prophecy the cessation of all heathen enmity against Israel, so does ראשית ('beginning') have its definite meanings, namely, in the sense of the first manifestation of this heathen enmity. And Amalek showed this hatred in deeds first of all, because the hatred of the Egyptians cannot be taken into account, because the Israelites were not independent in Egypt, and only became a nation in the eyes of the world after their departure from Egypt. Certainly the word גוים by itself does not signify a hostile opposition to Israel, but it acquires this significance here in this connection in which the nations are only considered as hostile (Kurtz, *Gesch.* ii. p. 503). The Lord enjoins the Israelites not to 'abhor an Egyptian, because they were strangers in his land' (Deut. xxiii. 7),

who had taken advantage of the hospitality and protection of the Israelites to promote their own low and temporal profits, will also not go unpunished.<sup>1</sup>

but he commands them at the same time to destroy Amalek 'and to put out the remembrance of him from under heaven' (Exod. xvii. 14, 16; Deut. xxv. 19), because 'he feared not God, and smote the hindmost of the Israelites, even all that were feeble behind them, when they were faint and weary' (ver. 18). However, destruction is prophesied here not only to the posterity of Amalek, but to all those who were, like them, hostile to Israel.

<sup>1</sup> Under the name of Kenites, קִינִי (Septuagint) Κεναῖον, are to be understood the Kenites of Canaan mentioned in the Book of Genesis (xv. 19). We suppose it to be so because, according to the fundamental idea of the prophecy, the Kenites are meant to represent another nation hostile to Israel, and it is only in consequence of this that this people could have become known to Balaam, an inhabitant of distant Mesopotamia. He expresses in two words his prophecy concerning the fate which awaits them: Assyrian, קִנְנִי, Kinnu (camp, nest, family; Schrader, *Keilinschrif.* p. 516), and קִינִי (according to the Septuagint), קִנְנִי, the Kenites. The mountainous town of Kanan is often mentioned in the Egyptian chronicles of the fourteenth century B.C. It was situated in the territories occupied by the roving tribes Shassu (Idumeans, therefore side by side with the Amalekites) in Wady-Araba, to the south of the Dead Sea. This fortress lay in the mountainous country on the eastern border of the land of the roving of the Shassu (see Brugsch, *Egypt*, pp. 230, 240). The commentators of Western Europe give the same explanation (Hengstenberg, *Bil.*, pp. 190-193; Fürst, *Handwörterb.*). Evidently the Kenites here mentioned derived their name from the fortified nests (aoul: Caucasian village) built by them in the mountains, and which were thus called to distinguish them from the other tribes of Canaan who lived in the valleys (see Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, iii., note 8 to Book of Numbers, and Onkelos, i.e. Rosenmüller in *Scholia*, also Knobel, *Ex.-Handbook*, xiii. *sub voce*). (1) The Kenites are mentioned amongst the enemies of Israel, and the sad fate awaiting them is here prophesied. The Kenites of Midian, on the contrary, were a peaceful little people living in friendship with the Israelites, who always remembered the services rendered by their forefathers during their journey in the desert (cf. Num. x. 29-32); and, except the passages quoted from the Book of Judges and the two Books of Samuel (1 Sam. xxvii. 10), shows that the Kenites of Midian, who were in friendship with Israel, lived in a southern country. (2) It would have been strange if Balaam had not mentioned the Canaanites amongst the foes of Israel. This would have been the case if, under the name of Kenites, were meant the Midianites and not the Canaanites, especially as the war with the Canaanites was still being waged. Those who lived beyond the Jordan had been conquered, and the Israelites were then fighting with the Canaanites who lived on this side of the Jordan. In the Book of Numbers (xxi. 1-3), therefore, just before the appeal of the Moabites to Balaam, it is said that King Arad the Canaanite, who dwelt in the south, fought against Israel and took some of them prisoners, and was afterwards vanquished by the Israelites:

Their worldly wisdom will not save them, let them keep to their almost inaccessible mountain strongholds, let them become the allies of the chosen people, dwell amongst them like strangers, within the ramparts of Israel's theocracy, and let them build habitations for their fledglings on the high rock of Jehovah's unchanging protection of His people,<sup>1</sup> still nothing will save them from captivity. According to their custom, the terrible Assyrians will lead away the conquered people into captivity, and they will disappear in the multitude of races and sink under the waves of this mighty empire.'<sup>2</sup>

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'And the Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and he called the name of the place *Hormah*' (ver. 3). This is probably the historical basis for the declaration, 'and Cain will be taken captive.'

According to the testimony of the Book of Numbers (xiv. 25, 43, 45), the Canaanites lived with the Amalekites in a mountainous country which forms the southern border of the land of Canaan. These were probably the Kenites whose dwellings are in the mountains. Balaam probably chose them as the representatives of the Canaanites because they were the first to declare war against Israel, and also because they lived together with the Amalekites, so that the mental passage from the one to the other was easy. The different tribes are usually characterised by their dwellings (Hengstenberg, *Bil.*, pp. 190-192). The confirmation of this view is to be found in the *History of Egypt* by Brugsch, pp. 230-240.

<sup>1</sup> The Septuagint has translated ἰδ by the word *νοστιά*, which means 'little ones,' 'fledglings,' as in Assyrian. A part of these Kenites lived in the north (Judg. iv. 11, 17), another part in the south near the Amalekites (Judg. i. 16; 1 Sam. xv. 6, xxvii. 10), and in cities (1 Sam. xxx. 29). They kept up friendly relations with the Israelites, but the fusion was not complete, particularly in regard to religion.

<sup>2</sup> It is to be supposed that a part of the Kenites was led away into captivity during the most ancient expedition of the Assyrians to Palestine during the reign of Chushan-rishathaim. Scarcely anything is known of this expedition (Judg. iii. 8). Another part shared the same fate later in the days of Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria (2 Kings xv. 9), and Sennacherib (2 Kings xviii. 13). According to the hints of the Egyptian chronicles (Brugsch, pp. 238, 239), Assyria was already a formidable power in the eyes of Egypt and the nations of Canaan as far back as the times of Moses and Balaam. Rawlinson supposes that soon after, about 1300 B.C., Tiglatinin, king of Assyria, attacked Chaldea and became sovereign of all Mesopotamia (see Brugsch, *Egypt*, 303, note 1; Rawlinson, *Anc. Monarch. of Chaldea*, v. 1, sch. viii. pp. 149-151, 167, 168, 171, 2nd ed., 1871). According to the Book of Genesis (x. 9-12), Asshur, the founder of Nineveh and the cities of Rehoboth, Calah, and Resen, went out of the land of Shinar, where he

Nevertheless, a similar destiny was in store both for the terrible Assyria and Balaam's native Mesopotamia: in the misty distance of the north, from the 'side' of Chittim,<sup>1</sup>

reigned over Babel, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh (supposed by D. Chwolson to be the founder of the Arabian dynasty in Mesopotamia, Nimrod). In every case the mention in this chapter of Asshur after Nimrod deserves notice, in view of the above-mentioned combination of D. Chwolson.

<sup>1</sup> The expression 'from the side,' צִדְּךָ or צִדְּיָךְ, as in the version of the Septuagint (ἐκ χειρῶν), may be translated 'from the pillars' (cf. 1 Sam. xv. 12; Ps. cxli. 6). This name was given to the ramifications of the mountains of Chittim, Amanus, and Taurus, which were called 'the four pillars of the sky' in the language of the Egyptian monuments (Brugsch, *Egypt*, pp. 284, 351). A certain land is meant by the name of Chittim, but men of science are to this day uncertain as to its situation and to the countries of which it was composed. Gesenius (*Thesaur.*), Knobel (*Kurzgefasstes Handb.* xii. p. 95), Dubois de Monpero (see Vlastov, *Sacred Chron.* i. p. 120), and several others, give a double meaning to Chittim—(1) they understand it to be the isle of Cyprus, and (2) all the islands and northern coast of the Mediterranean. Others take Chittim in a more limited signification—either only as the isle of Cyprus (Hengstenberg, pp. 199-202; Schrader, *Keilinschr.* pp. 85, 86), or Macedonia (Michaelis, *Supplem. ad Lex. Heb.*; De Geer, p. 125, according to Isa. xxiii. 1; Ezek. xxvii. 6), or Latium (Bochart, *Geogr.* I.P. xliii.; De Geer, p. 125). All these opinions are founded upon πρῶτον ψεῦδος, and ignore the point of view of the sacred historian and of Balaam. We will endeavour to put ourselves in their place and see what they could know about Chittim. It is most probable that neither Moses nor Balaam could have any notion that Chittim designated the isle of Cyprus, which had more a commercial than political importance, or the distant coasts of the peninsulas of Italy and the Balkans, for all these places were at a good distance from Egypt (where Moses had grown up) and Haran (the native place of Balaam). It is, on the contrary, more probable to suppose that they meant by Chittim the powerful kingdom of Het, which was situated to the north-west of Haran (and the middle Euphrates), in the ramifications of the mountains of Amanus and Taurus, that is to say, in northern Syria, Cilicia, Lycaonia, Cappadocia, Armenia as far as the river Hovar and the lake Van (see Vlastov, Map of the First Population), and in general all the territory situated to the north-west. This conjecture is justified by the following considerations: (1) The Septuagint read and understood Chittim nearly the same as Hittia, namely, Χεττίον (1 Kings x. 29; 2 Kings vii. 6), Κετταίοι (Hittites), Χέρτερον (Chittim). In the Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions the word 'earth' (mat), Hatti, Heta, is often met with. 'We already find this name,' says Schrader (*Keilinschr.* pp. 107-109), 'in the cylindrical inscription of the first Tiglath-Pileser (about 1100 years B.C.), and from that time to the period of Esarhaddon; it disappears from the period of his son and heir Assurbanipal. It has been found out by comparison between the inscriptions referring to this question that these Hittites lived to the west of the middle Euphrates (counting from Sameisat

before the divinely enlightened vision of Balaam appear the numerous hordes of Gog. An unendurable grief and

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to Balis and the Orontes); they were divided into various little kingdoms, amongst which that of Karchemish, near the Euphrates, occupied a particularly prominent position. The king of Karchemish is called in the inscriptions directly 'king of the land of Hatti' (Aurnasirhabal, 65; cf. L. 57 Sargon, *Layard*, 34, 22); the name 'mat Hatti' was used in this primitive sense by the Assyrians up to the eighth century B.C. From the reign of Tiglath-Pileser II. (745-742) and Sargon (722-705) the Assyrians systematically took possession of the territory occupied by the Hittites. Sargon included in the Assyrian empire the two Hittite kingdoms of Karchemish (717) and Kummuh-Kommagene (708), so that the lands of Chatti were removed farther to the west, and in the reign of Sargon even the Philistine town Ashdod (Azotus) bore the name of city of Chittim. In the reigns of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon the name of the land of Hatti was transferred to the lands of Canaan and Palestine, situated near the coast, also to the countries of Edom, Moab, and Ammon; in the reign of Assurbanipal, on the contrary, the name itself disappears completely, and the above-named territories are designated by the ancient name of 'mat Acharri,' which means 'western country.' This leads to the conclusion that (1) in ancient times (earlier than 1100 B.C.) there existed to the north-west of Balaam's native place the vast and powerful country of Hatti; (2) that in the language of the Assyrians and of the inhabitants of Mesopotamia in general the name of the land of Hatti is used to express the west up to the reign of Esarhaddon; and (3) that this name disappears about the eighth century. By comparing the Egyptian inscriptions with the Assyrian, it appears that the powerful and vast land of Hatti was called in Egyptian Kiti, Kittim (Brugsch, *Hist. of the Pharaohs*, transl. by Vlastov, pp. 304, 334), Kittim (p. 351), Hita (pp. 472-476). This nation, composed of many separate tribes, occupied a prominent position in North Syria and to the west of Asia Minor during the period from the reign of Thothmes III. to Rameses (sixteenth to fourteenth century B.C.). It is said in the historical narrative of the exploits of Rameses II. during the war with Hita, that 'the king of Hita came with all the kings of all the cities . . . in great numbers from all the countries which lie in the possession of the land of Hita' (Brugsch, p. 472). We read, among other things, the following details in the heroic poem of Pentaura which commemorates this war: 'And when the king (Rameses II.) approached the town, the despised king of the hostile Hita arrived at the same time. He had gathered around him all the nations from the most distant ends of the sea to the people Hita. All the nations arrived in full numbers' (Brugsch, p. 471). The power of the Hittites was considerably weakened by this war, but their supremacy in Syria was so firmly established that Rameses II. willingly accepted the offers of peace (pp. 489-496) 'of the great and powerful King Hita' (p. 490). Therefore, the land of Kittim or Hita, lying to the north-west of Harran or of 'the land of the sons of Amu' (cf. Brugsch, p. 351), was a powerful empire, and evidently included the whole of Armenia and Asia Minor about the time of Balaam's arrival at the Moabites and the entrance of the Israelites into the land of Canaan. Is not this powerful country identical

overwhelming terror fill the soul of the diviner at the sight of this terrible cloud rising from the northern borders.<sup>1</sup> Who will

with כְּתִיִּים or כְּתִיִּים, the land of Chittim of the Bible? (Gen. x. 4; Isa. xxiii. 1, 12; Jer. ii. 10; Ezek. xxvii. 6; Dan. xi. 30). As the letter כ is pronounced both like 'k' and 'ch,' the Septuagint, in conformity with this law, read Kittim in the Pentateuch, and Chittim in the prophets; it is therefore evident that the Kittim or Chittim of the Bible is the name of the land of Hatti (Assyrian), Kittim (Egyptian inscriptions). The identity of Chittim, Kittim, Hita, Kittim of the Egyptian monuments and Hatti of the Assyrians is fully confirmed by the Book of Maccabees, where the Macedonian king Persius is called βασιλεὺς Κιττεῶν, and where it is said that Alexander, king of Macedonia, came out of the land of Kittim (Septuagint, Κερρεῖλυ). It is known that Alexander of Macedonia was the first herald of the supremacy of the sons of Japheth (Kittim) over the Semitic and Asiatic nations (according to the prophecy under comment), and that he came out (but did not sail in vessels from the side of Chittim, as said in the Massoreth reading) of Asia Minor, just through the centre of the former land, Hatti, Egyptian Chittim or Kittim. Another circumstance also speaks in favour of this conjecture—the resemblance of the nationality of Kittim (Gen. x. 4) with that of Hatti or Hitta. The powerful and civilised nation Kittim is called in Gen. x. 4 'the posterity of Japheth'; and according to the cuneiform inscriptions (Schrader, 109, 110) and to the Egyptian chronicles, the nation of Kittim or Hitti cannot belong to the Semitic race, but rather to that of Japheth, as the names of its cities, kings, and captains bear a resemblance to Greek names (Brugsch, pp. 432-436). If we take into consideration that the kingdom of Chittim became from the thirteenth century B.C. the target of the terrible and ferocious Assyrian kings, and finally fell to pieces through their disastrous invasions, so that a part of the Hittites had to seek refuge in the isles and peninsulas of Italy and Greece at the time of the Grecian wars and migration of nations, it becomes quite comprehensible why the prophets Isaiah (xxiii. 1, 12), Ezekiel (xxvii. 6), and Daniel (xi. 30) all mention Chittim as a name embracing all the islands and coasts of the Mediterranean sea. Therefore from the point of view of Moses and Balaam, Chittim was a powerful and civilised nation settled to the north-west of Mesopotamia, and occupying, according to the opinion of the later prophets, all the north-western and western coasts and isles of the Mediterranean sea. This explanation of the position of Chittim renders the prophecy comprehensible. The representation of the warlike Asshur called forth, by the law of association, in the mind of Balaam, the image of the powerful nation of Chittim, and the voice from heaven told him that the nations from the side of Chittim will subdue the bloodthirsty Assyrians and the sons of Eber subject to them, who are the voluntary or involuntary associates of their devastating wars. Many Egyptologists, particularly M. de Rouge, have long since acknowledged that the Assyrian Hatti, the Egyptian Hitta, and the Hittites of the Old Testament are identical (see Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, ii. p. 395, note 74).

<sup>1</sup> See parallel passages, Isa. xiii. 1-22; Jer. x. 2-16; Ezek. xxxviii., xxxix.

escape from the stream of death poured out from the hands of the people of Gog? Who will survive this bloody slaughter of nations? Lo, the Almighty will bring the innumerable hosts of Gog from the side lying to the north of the land of Chittim; they will smite and subdue<sup>1</sup> the proud fortresses of the haughty Assyrians and of their allies, the plundering and robber descendants of Eber (Iactan), which means the roving inhabitants of Arabia and of the land adjoining the Euphrates,<sup>2</sup> the native country of Balaam, but Gog and all

<sup>1</sup> The verb עָנָה, in the form Pi עָנָה, always signifies great oppression and misfortune (cf. Gen. xxxi. 50; Deut. viii. 2, 3, 16; Judg. xvi. 6, 19; 1 Kings xi. 39).

<sup>2</sup> The comprehension of the word Eber is not yet thoroughly established by the commentators; and even the ancient translators differed in its interpretation. The Septuagint (*κακώσουσιν Ἑβραίους*) and the Vulgate (*vastabuntque Hebraeos*) evidently consider under the name of Eber the Hebrews, descendants of Jacob; Onkelos, on the contrary, considered this name as belonging to the inhabitants of the Euphrates, the Mesopotamians. This divergence of opinions continues to this day. For example, Rosenmüller acknowledges under the name of Eber the Mesopotamians. Tholuck and Hitzig and our countrymen (Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*) find that this word indicates the Hebrews. The latter opinion must be put aside as a hasty conclusion; the first may yet be accepted with certain modifications. The reference to the Hebrews is inadmissible, from the following conclusions: (1) It is not probable in itself that the patriarch Eber should be in such close connection with the Israelites, as in the genealogy (Gen. x.) he is represented only as an intermediate member of whom nothing remarkable is said to distinguish him from the other nations who had the same origin as the Israelites (Hengstenb. *Bil.* p. 206). Some quote the name עֵבֶרִים; but in the form of this name there is no foundation for deriving it from the person bearing the name of Eber, and there is no obstacle against taking the word עֵבֶרִים in the sense of 'coming from the other side,' as the word עֵבֶרִי is translated in the Septuagint by *περάτης*. Hesychius observes, ὁ Ἑβραῖος περάτης, and Eusebius, Ἑβραῖοι, οἱ πέρατοι ἐμμενεύονται διαπεράσαντος Εὐφράτην Ἀβραάμ καὶ οὐκ ὡς οὐνοὶ τινες ὑπὸ Ἑβερ (cf. Hyde, p. 51) for the adjectives ending with *ῥ* are usually applied, according to Ewald (*gr. Gr.*, p. 249) 'as derived from common names to show the origin and occupation.' That this derivation is the only correct one is evident from the fact that this name is used principally in relation to strangers (cf. Ewald, *gr. Gr.*, p. 2), a circumstance which can only be explained by the derivation which gives this name an external stamp, by the fact that it has proceeded specially from the Canaanites, and indicated emigrants (nomad) in relation to themselves. This is particularly noticeable in the first place in which this name is mentioned (Gen. xiv. 13), 'And there came one that had escaped,



his hosts will also perish with them (see parallel passages, Ezek. xxxviii. 2, xxxix. 1-16).

Such was the last act of this universal historical drama, reflected in the rays of Balaam's inspiration.<sup>1</sup> Balak and his

and told Abram the Hebrew' (the emigrant, the stranger). This passage shows us how the natives looked for help and protection from the strangers (Hengst. pp. 207, 208). 'The mournful exclamation of Balaam in Num. xxiv. 23 is also a proof that the misfortune prophesied refers to the children of his own people (cf. Num. xxii. 5); but the principal decisive fact is that if Eber is to be taken for Hebrew, the prophecy itself loses its sense and disagrees with Num. xxiv., 14 where Balaam represents his prophecy penetrated with this idea . . .' (Hengst. *Bil.* p. 209). Another fact is also against the interpretation of Eber as Hebrew, that Balaam was appointed to bless Israel (Num. xxiii. 20), and the Lord turned his curse into a blessing to Israel (Deut. xxiii. 5); therefore Balaam could not prophesy any disaster to Israel, and the latter could not in any way be meant under the name of Eber, who was doomed to perish (De Geer, *Bil.* p. 126). In all the parables the chosen people is called Israel and Jacob. We may therefore justly conclude that Eber could not have meant Hebrew; the opinion which designates Eber as the 'lands beyond the Euphrates' has also no solid foundation. If we take the point of view of Balaam himself, it will be much more probable to suppose that under the name of Eber are meant the inhabitants of both banks of the Euphrates, the descendants of Eber (of his two sons), namely, the descendants of Peleg, excluding Abraham (Gen. xi. 16-27), who dwelt in Mesopotamia, and the descendants of Joktan (Gen. x. 25-30), who inhabited the neighbouring Arabia. This is the more probable, as at the time of Balaam's appearance on the scene of history, the sons of Eber, in the persons of his descendants, occupied a 'vast space of land, including a great part of Arabia, namely, from Messalika to Djebel, Shomar, Hedonase, Yemen, Hadramaut, and Mahra' (see Vlastov, *Sacred Chron.* i. p. 160, note 58 to Gen. x.). As these tribes led a nomad life (which is indicated by the name of their ancestor, for the root עָבַר means originally 'to cross the country,' 'to rove'), and as they occupied the same territory as the nation of Shassu, it may be admitted that they were the Arabian conquerors who reigned in Mesopotamia from 1546 to 1300 B.C., and a mixture of tribes who roved about the Arabian peninsula (for in the prophecy of Ezek. xxxviii. 13 it is said that the Arabian tribes Sheba and Dedan will also suffer from the invasion of Gog). Under the name of Eber we must also understand another branch of the descendants of Eber through Peleg and Abraham (Gen. xi. 16-27), the numerous and warlike sons of Ishmael (Gen. xvi. 12, xvii. 20, xxi. 18).

<sup>1</sup> We must represent to ourselves Balaam's vision of the destruction of all these nations—not as a successive series of events, taking place in a certain space of time, but as flashes of light seen by him in perspective and pronounced as they shone upon him. From the psychological point of view, the form in which the prophets expose the future gives reason to explain in the following manner the conditions in which distant events are foreseen :

princes listened in trembling curiosity to these inspired words, and gazed with painful feelings at the tents of the chosen people. Meanwhile Balaam returned to his usual frame of mind; and sorrowfully acknowledging that he had no more to do in the land of Moab, he rose up and went, and returned<sup>1</sup> with his servants to his place on the banks of his native Euphrates. Balak, followed by his princes, also descended from the height of Mount Peor and went his way to his capital (Num. xxiv. 25).

#### THE TRUTH AND BEAUTY OF BALAAM'S PARABLES.

§ 8. The above interpretation of Balaam's parables would not be complete if we did not show how far they, like all other Divine decrees, were at the appointed time actually realised in history. It is easy to see, even in their literal sense, that these parables represent the historical destinies of nations, not only in their

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'The future appears to them for the greater part in the form of present, current, and even past events. This distant future presents itself to their mental gaze as already fulfilled in the same manner as contemporary events, and appears in the usual picture of the facts which come under our observation. Sometimes—and even not unfrequently—a distant event shows itself to the prophetic gaze at the same time as the contemporary events through which or after which it is revealed. An analogous event out of the contemporary current reality opens to the prophet a whole vista of events which cannot be conceived by a natural effort of thought, and which are only accessible to the mind of an inspired prophet. In this case the picture shows itself according to the laws of perspective; the nearer events appear more distinct in their features than those that belong to a remote future. There is nothing more natural than this form of prophetic visions, when the human spirit, under the influence of the Spirit of God, rises above the natural conditions of its knowledge, not suppressed by the Divine power, but still remaining a limited human spirit' (Bishop Chrysanthus, *Religions of the Ancient World*, iii. p. 306).

<sup>1</sup> The expression 'returned' is an exact translation of the Hebrew *שָׁבָה*, in accordance with the Septuagint *ἀποστραφείς*. The generally adopted interpretation in Western Europe of *שָׁבָה* in the sense of 'returned,' joined to *לְמָקוֹמוֹ*, 'to his place,' has given rise to a comparison of the passages of Num. xxxi. 8, 16, and Joshua xiii. 22, and has led to the conclusion that these contradictory testimonies render the authenticity of these facts doubtful; but this is malevolent cavilling on the part of the rationalists, for (according to Winer) the word *שָׁבָה* does not include the fact of the aim having been attained (see Hengst. *Bibl.* p. 212).

contemporary condition, but, what is far more important, in the distant future. According to the declaration of Balaam himself (Num. xxiii. 12, 26, xxiv. 17), and of the sacred historian (Num. xxiii. 4, 5, 16, xxiv. 2), they were the words of God, the revelation of His thoughts, from the lips of the Mesopotamian soothsayer. Meanwhile, *'heaven and earth shall pass away, but His words will not pass away'* (Matt. xxiv. 35). In what manner were the words of the Lord, pronounced by this unique heathen prophet, accomplished?

According to the inspired testimony of Balaam, the posterity of the patriarch Jacob *'dwells alone, and is not reckoned among the nations. It is a righteous people'* (Num. xxiii. 9, 10). *'There is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel; according to this time it shall be said'* (by the prophets) *'of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought?'* (ver. 23). And thus it was in reality. The moral isolation of Israel, its peculiar educational position in the world, its exclusive religious creed and particular social life, are testified to by history. In the words of the Bible, *'All the nations have become drunken of the wine of the cup of Bel and Baal'* (Jer. li. 7), that is to say, the god of nature. Not one of these nations rose to the comprehension of God as of an Infinite Being, separate from the world. The Hebrew religion was the only ancient creed which proclaimed Jehovah as immeasurably above the finite world; the Hebrew alone, the inhabitant of the insignificant country of Palestine, believed in the true God, unknown to other nations. He differed entirely from other nations by his spiritual life, by his political organisation, and, above all, by the problem he was destined to solve in history. *'The Israelite,'* says Schaff, *'cannot gather laurels either in political life, like the ancient Roman or Persian, nor in arts and sciences, like the Greek; in these respects he is far behind other nations. The problem which he solved in his solitary life, isolated from other nations, was a different one. He lived by his faith and exclusively for his faith.'* *'Religion*

for the Hindoo was a matter of imagination,' says the same historian, 'for the Greek a matter of æsthetic feeling, for the Roman one of political calculation. For the Hebrew alone it was a matter that concerned the heart and feelings, not only the principal one, as it is for many other nations, but it may be said the exclusive object of his inner aspirations and of his heart's deepest attachment. The Hebrew knew no other wisdom than that of religion; he had no other philosophy, no other poetry, but that which is contained in the Holy Scriptures; he knew of no other art, except the sacred art, and has left us no artistic monuments but the temple of his Jehovah.'<sup>1</sup> The religion of the Israelites was unlike that of the other nations of antiquity. 'All the different streams and currents of religious life in the ancient world were connected with each other and flowed in one common direction. The Hebrew faith alone had a separate current of religious life which remained pure and unmixed with others. Some of the Semitic races, descended from the same source as the Hebrews, were the only ones whose religious faith came partially in contact with this clear and limpid stream, but their faith was dimmed by the floods of naturalism, and had lost its original purity. Amongst all the religions of antiquity the Hebrew faith alone was a religion of the spirit.' It is the religion of penitence amongst the ancients. 'It begins,' says Schaff, 'by the melancholy narrative of the Fall, and closes with the words, "Repent ye,"<sup>2</sup> pronounced by the Precursor as the last representative of the righteousness of the Old Testament.' According to the testimony of the Apostle Paul, to the Israelites '*pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen*' (Rom. ix. 4, 5); 'for

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Chrysanthus, *Religions of the Ancient World*, iii. pp. 23, 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 4, 5, 156.

*salvation is of the Jews*' (John iv. 22). Unrighteousness, therefore, never formed a predominant feature in the life of the Hebrew people as a nation chosen of God; Israel, on the contrary, sought after '*the law of righteousness*' (Rom. ix. 31), sought it '*by the works of the law*' (ver. 32). His ideal was an aspiration after holiness in the midst of peaceful abundance (Deut. xxxiii. 28, 29). The consciousness of man's guiltiness of sin before God, and the fear proceeding from thence before the unapproachable holiness of the Lord, was a characteristic feature of the sons of Israel. The ancient descendants of Jacob were in this matter as incorruptible as conscience itself. 'Amongst the religions of the ancient world, the Hebrew faith, in the question of submission to God, was like our conscience, that quiet, imperceptible, but watchful and constant witness of our actions.'<sup>1</sup> Standing alone amidst the world of antiquity, almost unknown, this religion never ceased to preach penitence at a time when nearly all the heathen nations celebrated their imaginary union and friendship with the gods by boisterous orgies and debauchery.<sup>2</sup> In consequence of this, the better part of the Hebrew nation was pure from unrighteousness, and at the same time inaccessible to real misfortunes, that is, to spiritual corruption and bodily weakness. They were free from many imaginations, which, being vanity and illusion, represented a deviation from primary righteousness (Eccles. vii. 29). The political organisation of Israel was peculiar in itself. At first it was a theocracy in the full sense of the word, that is to say, without kings, not, as in India and Egypt, where kings and princes reigned from the beginning, notwithstanding the domination of the priests. For a long time the Hebrews knew of no other chiefs but the elders of the families and the guides chosen by God Himself for the government of His people.

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Chrysanthus, *Religions of the Ancient World*, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 162.

The theocratic form of government may have been unfavourable to the development of political life; but the Hebrews did not care for politics, their aims were exclusively religious. The absence of a king during the early period of their political development had saved them from the despotic oppression and violence so usual at that time, and had also preserved them from a luxurious life, so injurious to national prosperity. Neither did the hierarchy in power, either priests or judges, exercise oppressive influence on the people of God, as was the case in Egypt. The whole people of Israel was a sacred and chosen nation, and there was nowhere anything similar to be seen. The Hebrews knew of no social distinctions or divisions in classes to the very end of their existence, the sole exception being that the priests were taken from the tribe of Levi alone.<sup>1</sup> The Lord God, Who was present among them, strictly forbade them to use divination, or to consult charmers, wizards, or necromancers (Deut. xviii. 10-15): '*God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets*' (Heb. i. 1). He raised up in their midst glorious men, heroes of faith and piety, who, like Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, Samuel, David, '*subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens*' (Heb. xi. 32-34). The Lord never cast away His people, for even when they fell into open depravity there always remained '*a remnant according to the election of grace*' (Rom. xi. 1-5). Thus '*this people shall not be reckoned among the nations*' (Num. xxxiii. 9). It does not share the fate of other people, and the Lord is its defence. The truth of this prophecy has been wonderfully justified to this very day, notwithstanding the (temporary) obduracy of the sons of Jacob against the Messiah (Rom. xi.

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Chrysanthus, *Religions of the Ancient World*, p. 329.

25, 31), '*for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance*' (Rom. xi. 29). Thus, thanks to their longevity compared with other nations, the throngs of Israel's sons grow from day to day, so that who can count the dust of Jacob or the myriads of Israel's sons? In this manner is realised the promise given by the Lord to Abraham and Jacob, that their seed will be as the dust of the earth (Gen. xiii. 16, xxviii. 14), and that they will be numerous as the stars of heaven (Deut. x. 22).

Balaam's prophecy of the beauty and goodliness of Israel's dwellings (Num. xxiv. 5, 6) was also soon fulfilled. In the reign of Solomon Israel's tents were no longer closely pitched in camps, as at the time of Balaam's visions. Permanent dwellings had been erected in their stead in the promised land, and they were goodly and fair to look at by the abundance of riches bestowed by the Lord. Those dwellings are like shady oases in the desert which attract the weary traveller, like the perfume of the aloe, and, like the cedars of Lebanon, are glorious by the stateliness of their inhabitants. Such a position could not have been taken up by the chosen people otherwise than by the help of God; their laws, customs, and destinies appointed them to be 'a light to the Gentiles' (Isa. xlix. 6; Acts xiii. 47); therefore, the Hebrews could scarcely rely on the sympathy and friendship of those who partook of the drunken cup of Bel. At all times they were weaker in numbers, and especially in military forces, also less advanced in culture than the great historical empires, such as Egypt, the land of the Hittites, Assyria, Babylon, etc. Hence the other nations were constantly rising up in arms against the Israelites, trying to convert them into material for ethnography, to deprive them of their sacred independence, and kill in them the pledge of the moral life, the blessing of future generations of men. But God, Who had called Israel out of Egypt (Hosea xi. 1) when His people were attacked by other nations, was like the destructive force of the

unicorn's horn. In the year of the war led by Joshua for the possession of the promised land (Joshua v.-xii.), and during the time of their mighty rising against their foes and oppressors under their Judges (Judg. iii., vi., x., xiii. ; 2 Sam. vii.), the sons of Israel rose like the lioness in defence of her cubs, or the young lion who does not lie down till he eats his prey, or drinks the blood of the slain. Jehovah was their strength (Joshua xxiii. 3, 5, 6, 9, 10 ; Heb. xi. 32-34). It was the same during the wars of the Maccabees. In all these cases the Israelites were indefatigable in their struggles, and at the last they survived their pursuers and tormentors ; there came a time when, according to Balaam's words (Num. xxiv. 7), Israel's kingdom was exalted above many nations during the reign of the kings Saul, David, and Solomon (1 Sam. xi.-xiv. 8, 47, 48 ; 2 Sam. and 1 Kings i.-xi.). Saul and David personified the horns of the unicorn ; Israel, by the strength of God, 'ate up the nations of his enemies and broke their bones' (2 Sam. xxii. 37-43, 48). The prophecy of Balaam 'of the luminous star which will come out of Jacob' (Num. xxiv. 17) was realised still more completely in the reign of David. This '*light of Israel*' (2 Sam. xxi. 17) conquered the king of Moab, subdued the turbulent nations of Palestine, those sons of the wicked Seth (2 Sam. viii.), and made humble tributaries of the Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Ammonites, Malekites, and the Sabæans. In the reign of Solomon, according to the prophecy of Balaam (Num. xxiv. 8), the people of Israel enjoyed the gifts of peace and prosperity, so that '*Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beer-sheba*' (1 Kings iv. 25). But this short time of peace was but a symbol of the eternal peace to come in the future. The descendants of Israel needed yet to be confirmed and to grow in Divine strength (Num. xxiv. 18 ; cf. Ps. lix. 17, cviii. 13) ; whilst, by the prophecy of the Mesopotamian soothsayer, all the implacable foes of Israel—the Edomites, Amalekites,



Kenites, Assyrians, and the robber tribes of Arabia—were all destined to vanish eternally from the stage of history at the time of the coming of the Messiah.<sup>1</sup>

It must nevertheless be acknowledged that the blessing of Balaam was only partially fulfilled in regard to the descendants of Jacob. It has become quite evident in the course of a long historical existence that the descendants of Jacob, taken in the literal sense, have never been, either collectively or individually, perfectly righteous, rich, or happy; for whole centuries they had neither prophecies nor the strength for honest, brave, open combat. They had only three remarkable kings in the course of three thousand years, and their political prosperity only lasted a few score of years. Generally speaking, in the course of the last two thousand years, upon the descendants of Israel were fulfilled with terrible exactitude all the deadly calamities foretold them by Moses for not observing the commandments of Jehovah (Deut. xxviii. 15-68). Even in the days of David and Solomon the kingdom of the Hebrews never attained the gigantic power of Gog (Num. xxiv. 7), the sovereign of the northern nations (as he is represented by Ezek. xxxviii.-xxxix. 6). The prophecy that the descendant of Jacob (Num. xxiv. 19) would completely overthrow this impious universal empire has never been in the least degree realised, nor is there to this day any sign that the bodily sons of Israel will ever reach the end of their painful struggles and attain perfect peace, and become (according to Num. xxiv. 9, 'Blessed is he that blesseth thee') the standard of blessing for all nations. On the contrary, whole generations of sons of Jacob faithful to the Lord '*have not yet received the promise*' (Heb. xi. 36-39).

*'What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with*

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<sup>1</sup> See Keith: *Proofs of the truth of Christianity founded on the literal fulfilment of the prophecies contained in the history of the Hebrews, and the discoveries of modern travellers*, 38th ed., 1870, pp. 261-496, Russian translation of O. El.

God? God forbid' (Rom. ix. 14). 'He is justified when He speaketh, and clear when He judgeth' (Ps. li. 4). The Word of God, which is the reflection of eternal being, has and must have a spiritual sense, mysterious and eternal, besides the literal historical sense referring to the past and present, to what is mutable and transitory. The Almighty only shows us the blessed existence of holiness, and the victorious struggle of incorruptible righteousness against the principles of falsehood and iniquity, as they are manifested on earth in temporary, visible, and mutable persons, objects, and actions.<sup>1</sup> In the history of humanity, the objects and actions themselves serve as symbols of other objects and actions, namely, of the spiritual and of the perfect. In the present case the inspired blessings of Balaam are called *ὑπό*, according to the Septuagint, *παραβολή*, parable. This word is used in the Holy Scriptures to indicate certain events or moral actions in which certain persons fulfil the will of God at an appointed historical moment, although incompletely and imperfectly, but which by virtue of the unity of law serve as a symbol of another more perfect fulfilment of God's desires. Therefore the narrative of the ordinances of Divine Service in the old Covenant (Heb. ix. 9) is called by the Apostle *παραβολή*, parable, which is contrasted with a period of amelioration and amendment (*διόρθωσις*), that is to say, the time of the Messiah in which the parable or symbol contained in the ritual law (Heb. ix. 1-15) was to be historically fulfilled. According to the general opinion, 'every parable has two sides, which require attention: one, which designates; the other, which is designated; therefore it has two significations, a literal and a secret one. But in this case the literal sense is only a means of showing the signification of the secret one, so that both

<sup>1</sup> According to the teaching of St. Augustine, 'the history of the Church on earth is a continuous and everlasting allegory of the heavenly future' (see *Questions of Philosophy and Psychology for 1892*, Book xiv. p. 11; article by Prince Troubetzkoy, 'The Philosophy of Christian Theocracy').

taken together only represent one sense, in which the literal expresses the outward, and the secret sense the inward essential side. And as the outward without the inward is the same as a body without a soul, it is clear that the essence of a parable is its secret sense, is the real signification of the Holy Scriptures, and consequently has not only an explanatory, but a demonstrative and obligatory power.<sup>1</sup> In reality, parables belong to the class of poetical productions in which the instructive part is expressed in the form of a strong and concise sentence clothed in vivid images and emblems, and therefore each parable has a double signification, literal and secret. In the present case the symbols do not refer to particular subjects and actions, but represent national events which have to be realised in the future. Therefore, the parables of Balaam bear the character of double prophecies, in which one part refers to the bodily descendants of the patriarch Jacob, and the other to his descendants by faith. In the present case the question of the historical fact witnessed by the contemporaries of Balaam is of less importance than his prophetic visions, which may on this occasion have a typical and historically prophetic signification; for in the same manner as an event which has already happened may have simultaneously a historical and symbolical signification, so can a vision as a symbol refer to two actions, divided from each other by a certain space of time. The true signification of every parable can be recognised by its aim, 'because the aim gives the key to the interpretation of the whole parable.'<sup>2</sup> Here the aim of Balaam's parables is clearly shown; they were prophetically pronounced by the will of the Lord as a blessing to Israel (Deut. xxiii. 5). But a prophetic blessing may have various significations. We have already given the interpretation of the blessing in a worldly sense, in the sense of the final domestic and political welfare of Israel. This

<sup>1</sup> Savvaïtov, P., *Orthodox Teaching of the Best Means of explaining the Holy Scriptures*, pp. 23, 24. St. Petersburg, 1857.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 24.

constitutes the covering of the true sense, so to say, the shadow of its contents (which in the parables is termed 'that which designates'). We must therefore search now for the other signification—the eternal in contrast to the temporal.

According to the testimony of the Apostle Peter, it was revealed to the prophets that '*not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you [Christians] by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven*' (1 Peter i. 12), and that the prophets have searched (ver. 10, ἐξηρεύνησαν; cf. Jer. xvii. 10), '*salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*' (ver. 5) at the manifestation of Jesus Christ. In this case there is no necessity of searching for the corresponding secret signification of every word in Balaam's parables; for but one thing is needful (Luke x. 42), and that one thing is the promise of the Spirit received through faith by the spiritual descendants of Jacob (Gal. iii. 7-9, 13-14). From this point of view the essence of Balaam's blessings consists in the fulness of the spiritual blessings contained and revealed in Jesus Christ: '*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him*' (Eph. i. 3-10).

We must understand, under the name of Israel, in reference to this perfect blessing, not only the faithful children of Jacob according to the flesh, but all those akin to him by the Spirit, the chosen of the remainder of humanity, for all '*they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham*' (Gal. iii. 7), all the faithful nations '*are blessed with faithful Abraham*' (Gal. iii. 9; cf. Gen. xii. 3, xvii. 5). The real descendants of Israel, regenerated by faith in Christ, are verily '*not of the world*' (John xv. 19), '*no man is able to pluck them out of the heavenly Father's hands*' (John x. 29); they are innumerable as the dust of the earth and as the stars of heaven (Rev. vii. 9). In truth, '*for them to live is Christ, and to die is gain*' (Phil. i. 21); they are righteous (Rom. v. 19), and there is no unrighteousness in them (1 John i. 9; Heb. viii. 10-12). Christ has delivered them from the greatest calamity—the bondage to sin (Heb. ii. 15; Gal. v. 1). God dwells in them (2 Cor. vi. 16). He worketh in them by His mighty power (Gal. iii. 5; Eph. i. 19, iii. 20; 1 Peter i. 5); they do not require any artificial means of learning the Divine will, for they are instructed by God (John v. 45; cf. Heb. xiii. 10, 11; Jer. xxxi. 31-34). All are partakers of the gift of prophecy (Acts ii. 16-18; cf. John xi. 28, 29). Their earthly houses (Job iv. 19; 2 Peter i. 14; 2 Cor. v. 1) represent an innumerable host of goodly tents, in which the Lord eternally dwells (2 Cor. vi. 16-18). Jesus Christ is the Man Who sprang out of Juda and descended from the seed of the patriarch Jacob (Heb. vii. 14) and David (Acts xiii. 22, 23; Rom. i. 3; 2 Tim. ii. 8), and Who is '*the Head of the body, the Church*' (Col. i. 18), '*the Lion of the tribe of Juda*' (Rev. v. 5), '*and the master over many nations*' (Rom. xv. 8-12; Rev. vii. 9, 10). By the will of His Divine Father He sent before His manifestation in the flesh a wonderful star which appeared in the East, in which Balaam's countrymen and his successors in the art of magic, 'the wise men of the East,' recognised the star prophesied by that ancient magian, the star of the true King of the Jews, and came to

worship Him' (Matt. ii. 2, 9, 10). He is the real '*bright and morning star*' (Rev. xxii. 16; 2 Peter i. 19) for all those who are subject to His sanctifying love; and like the ideal David (Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24), *he will smite . . . with the sharp sword that goeth out of his mouth, and shall rule with a rod of iron the nations who will not be subject to His truth* (Rev. xix. 15). In the last days before His glorious coming '*nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places*' (Matt. xxiv. 7). But all these are (only) the beginning of sorrows (ver. 8), the beginning of the days of affliction, when the nations will be given up to the power of strong delusion (2 Thess. ii. 9, 12; Matt. xxiv. 11-24), when Satan will *deceive the nations at the four quarters of the earth—Gog and Magog . . . the number of whom is as the sand of the sea*, and gather them to fight against the descendant of David (Rev. xx. 8; Acts xiii. 35-38; Luke i. 32).

The prophecy of Balaam is literally fulfilled in this struggle (Num. xxiv. 7) when he foretells the victory of the ideal king of Israel over Gog, the powerful sovereign of the nations of darkness (Ezek. xxxviii., xxxix.), in the person of the Messiah, when He '*shall have put down all rule and all authority and power*' (1 Cor. xv. 24). According to the prophecies *spoken in old times by the Lord's servants, the prophets of Israel* (Ezek. xxxviii. 17), the nations of Gog and Magog, led by the princes of darkness, will go up '*on the breadth of the earth, and compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city*' (Rev. xx. 9; cf. Ezek. xxxviii. 8-16). However, the struggle with Him Who sits on the throne of His glory (Matt. xix. 28; Rev. iv. 5, vi. 16) will not last long. '*Fire will come down from God out of heaven, and devour them [the nations], and the devil that deceived them [the prototype of Gog] will be cast down into the lake of fire and brimstone*' (Rev. xx. 9, 10; cf. Ezek. xxxviii. 22, xxxix. 17-22; Rev. xix. 11-21). The prophecy of Balaam will find its true accomplishment in this

fact. He foretold that *'out of Jacob shall come He that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city'* (Num. xxiv. 19), that is to say, *the last generations 'of the great city which reigns over the kings of the earth, who have drunk the wine of her fornication' (the worship of Mammon), 'and all the nations living on earth have drunken of her wine' (Rev. xviii. 8-20).* After that will come a time of unbroken peace, like the rest of the terrible lion (Num. xxiv. 9), when the spiritual descendants of Jacob will enjoy a blessed repose with God *'in the midst of a new heaven and a new earth, in the heavenly Jerusalem, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband'* (Rev. xxi. 1-3). *'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away'* (ver. 4). *'Instead of a temple'* in this city shining with many coloured lights, *'the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God will lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof'* (vers. 22, 23). *'And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there'* (vers. 24, 25). *'And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life'* (ver. 27).

But will not this interpretation appeared far-fetched? 'Perhaps, as some suppose, Balaam never prophesied anything concerning our Saviour? Those who think thus,' says the Blessed Theodoretus, 'must bear in remembrance that even the impious Nebuchadnezzar had a revelation of God and our Saviour. He saw a stone which was cut out without hands; it smote the image and broke the gold, silver, brass, iron, and clay, and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth (Dan.

ii. 34, 35). He Who foretold these things through Nebuchadnezzar and Balaam foretold the salvation of the universe, so that the heathen should also keep in their memory these same prophecies. And that which has been foretold has been fulfilled in reality' (Blessed Theodoretus, part i. p. 222, question 44).

The sublime contents of Balaam's blessings are invested with a peculiar literary form, and the question arises as to how this form is to be considered—Is it an absolutely necessary expression and outer clothing of the mental contents of the parables, or does it only constitute an artistic setting in which the sacred writer has placed the blessings of Balaam, which were transmitted to him by tradition? According to our conviction, the peculiar literary form of Balaam's parables is explained by the nature itself of the subjects and actions forming their contents. In reality, these blessings refer to the destinies of the nations, which find their true solution in the history of the Redeemer. This page of human history and the characters of the separate persons cannot be fitly transmitted otherwise than in salient figures of speech and with a harmonious combination of words; for the history of humanity, like every movement, is not only a picture, but also a harmonious association of sounds.<sup>1</sup> In conformity with this, the higher life must be transmitted not only in elevated figures of speech, but in a particular rhythmical construction of words; for life, as the highest good, generally flows like the harmonious effusions of a happy heart. Therefore Balaam's blessings were poured forth from the depths of his enlightened heart in picturesque and poetical terms, namely, in the form of parables; the moral part of these sacred poetical works being generally expressed in the form of short and powerful sentences, often as a proverb,<sup>2</sup> sometimes in a figurative and allegorical

<sup>1</sup> According to St. Augustine, melodious order = harmony.

<sup>2</sup> See Afanassiev, *Survey of the Educational Books of the Old Testament*, p. 197.



form.<sup>1</sup> Taken collectively, the parables of Balaam form a poem composed of several hymns, which by their beauty and symmetry form a luxuriant bouquet in the flower garden of Hebrew poetry. According to the very just opinion of the English scholar,<sup>2</sup> 'Hebrew poetry has nothing more elegant and choice than this poem.' 'The parallelism of thoughts is correct and polished to the highest degree. There is not a verse in which the parts do not correspond exactly to each other, so that the one borrows greater brilliancy and force from the other, and it is difficult to find amongst Hebrew poems any that surpass by their parallelism (symmetry) the hymns of Balaam; besides this, they are remarkable by a conciseness (laconism) which is peculiar to them. The subject is exposed almost unexpectedly and succinctly. The language is expressive and abrupt; contains a great deal in a few verses, although the theme is not always worked out in sufficient details, so that a certain obscurity is sometimes apparent; some words being left out, which a less excited poet would have inserted at the right place. Examples of this laconism occur in the analysis of the prophetic songs. All Balaam's prophecies are remarkable by the lightness of their composition; they generally begin by a choice introduction, flow on in a pleasing and uninterrupted series of images, and close by an energetic conclusion. The exposition of the subjects is full of life, the intensity of feeling increases gradually, and clearly betrays the fiery Eastern temperament. Finally, these prophetic songs are full of brilliant and pleasing images taken from nature, the poet uses them appropriately, so that they are not only an ornament to the style, but contribute to render the thoughts of the author impressive and elevated.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Iakimov, *Interpretation of the Prophet Jeremiah*, *Observ.* to xiv. 3-6.

<sup>2</sup> Lowth, *De Sacra Hebr. Poesi*, p. 421; quoted by De Geer, pp. 58, 59.

<sup>3</sup> De Geer, *Bil.* pp. 57, 58.

## CHAPTER VI

### BALAAAM'S PLACE IN HISTORY—HIS FALL

§ 1. SUCH is the true signification of Balaam's beautiful parables, and their merits are such as to assign to their author an honourable place amongst the heralds of truth, and to place him amongst the ranks of the luminaries of the world. Only, unfortunately, his subsequent conduct was such as to make it impossible to think of him as one would wish to do.

In the sixteenth verse of the thirty-first chapter of the Book of Numbers it is said that the Midianite women '*caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord;*' and in the twenty-fifth chapter of the same book the whole tale of shame and wickedness is given in detail. How could this have happened? By what means had Balaam become the instrument of the impiousness and destruction of some of the sons of Israel? It has already been fully explained in the right place that the Mesopotamian soothsayer, for various reasons, wished to weaken by his curse the holy energy of the Israelites, but the Lord God by His Word and Spirit turned the curse in Balaam's heart into a blessing to Israel (Deut. xxiii. 5). But such a disposition of mind could not remain inherent in Balaam; for the Word of God touches the heart of man only at certain divinely appointed moments, for some particular providential reason. But Balaam himself, as already said, in his usual condition, was malevolently inclined

towards the Israelites ; so that when the supernatural influence of the Spirit of God on Balaam's soul had passed away, and he returned to his usual disposition, his animosity against the Israelites as the (imaginary) foes of the Moabites was again stirred up, and his heart was full of vexation at the unsuccessful issue of his journey to the land of Moab. His dissatisfaction was naturally heightened by the spiritual and physical weariness following upon all the emotions which he had gone through during those remarkable days. Night was approaching, and he had to think of a resting-place. The only refuge which he could find on his way to Aram was with the Midianites, who lived or roved in those parts. It is true that the sacred historian Moses does not directly mention this fact ; 'but his silence in this respect may be easily explained by the circumstance that he had exclusively in view the description of the saving deeds of Jehovah in the destinies of His chosen people, and the remarkable events of their history, and therefore mentioned other tribes only as far as the invisible hand of Jehovah was manifested amongst them in connection with those events, without touching upon their private life. The supposition that the indefinite expression of the historian, "returned to his place" (Num. xxiv. 25), means that Balaam went home without stopping on his way, would only be plausible if the author was writing the history of Balaam, or even the history of Balaam's relations to Israel ; but as his only object was to show that, notwithstanding Balaam's wish to curse the people of God, he was forced to bless them, it is clearly evident that this is the central point of the narrative, as is said plainly in the Pentateuch (Deut. xxiii. 5, 6). It was quite indifferent to the writer whether Balaam reached the end of his journey or not, and he therefore leaves him on the way without conjecturing either what happened to him later, or what he would do.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hengstenberg, *Bil.* p. 213.

Therefore, we must be satisfied with more or less possible conjectures as to the subsequent fate of Balaam. In the first place, it is natural to suppose that he returned by the same way by which he had travelled with the princes of Moab, and which must have been free of the Israelites' camps. This part was occupied by the half-nomad Midianites who, as has been already said, lived on the eastern boundary of Moab, and to the south of the Ammonites on the elevated plain of Moab (שֵׁרֵי מוֹאב, Gen. xxxvi. 35). The Midianites, as is evident from the thirty-first chapter of Numbers, thanks to the fertility of their land, were wealthy; and it is quite natural to suppose that, being old acquaintances of Balaam's, they received him no less hospitably than when he was journeying with the king of Moab, and induced him to tarry some time with them. Balaam had no reason to refuse; it was winter<sup>1</sup> time, the weather was bad, the roads difficult for travelling without a sufficient number of guides. All these were reasons that may have inclined Balaam to stay with the Midianites and await a more favourable season or the passage of some trusty merchant's caravan going towards the banks of the Euphrates. Besides this, Balaam, with his natural cupidity, could not have forgotten that he had just been obliged to forfeit 'the reward of iniquity.' 'His heart was filled with rage and hatred against Israel, on whose account he had been obliged to refuse a rich reward; this was the decisive hour, the hour of the hardening of his heart.'<sup>2</sup> At that moment he entirely forgot that he was permitted to go to the Moabites and Midianites only under the condition of saying 'that which the Lord spoke (Num. xxii. 35), and doing what the Lord ordered (Num. xxiii. 26).' It was difficult for him to realise the danger of his position.

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<sup>1</sup> See Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, iii. pp. 4, 5, 13; Soliarsky, *Biblical Biograph. Diction.* vol v., word 'winter.'

<sup>2</sup> Kurtz, *Gesch. des alten Bund.* ii. p. 541.

The wealth of the Midianites, the cordiality of their princes,<sup>1</sup> the seductive freedom of intercourse with their women, may well have enchanted him and blinded him to the danger of tarrying in the midst of the foes of the blessed nation. He entered more and more into the unpleasant position of the Midianites with regard to Israel, and in accordance with the request of the former sought for means of safeguarding them from a possibly destructive attack of their foes. Such considerations probably led him to advise (Num. xxxi. 16) the Midianites to seek the friendship of Israel. But how was such a connection to be formed? Balaam, as one who thoroughly knew the human heart in general, and the heart of the people of that time in particular, easily came to the conclusion that the best means of attaining this aim would be by the feasts in honour of Baal, with all their accompanying gluttony, drunkenness, licentious dances, and unbridled debauchery. He long knew from experience that such festivals bring nations near to each other, smooth away differences and suspicious national exclusiveness. In the present case these means were ready to hand. The worship of Baal had penetrated long ago as far as the coast of the Dead Sea, and been established amongst the Midianites and Moabites under the name of Baal-peor.<sup>2</sup> Balaam therefore advised the Midianites to invite the sons of Israel to take part in the intoxicating and voluptuous festivals of Baal-peor, which took place in pleasant groves in the shade of the hills of the 'plain of Moab.' This advice was a real 'revelation' to the Midianites. They were all seized, as though by a magic force, with the intense desire of enticing the Israelites, and alluring them by the seductive sensuality of their beautiful women, aroused by Balaam's words. On the other hand, Balaam's word seems to

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<sup>1</sup> This is suggested by the mention of his death, together with the prince's (Num. xxxi. 8; Josh. xiii. 22).

<sup>2</sup> See Troitzky, T. G., *Religious Condition of the Hebrews in the Time of the Judges*, p. 107.

have acted for a time like witchcraft on the Israelites themselves.<sup>1</sup> By this means the baser part of the Israelites was struck in their most vulnerable point and in the weakest side of their character. 'It is well known that the boisterous and dissolute religious festivals of the rich and cultured Canaanites had a particular attraction for the coarser and more sensual members of the Israelites, who felt the restraint of the severity of the law of Moses, and found their own feasts tedious and dull.'<sup>2</sup> The Israelites fell more than once in consequence of this attraction during the time of the Judges (Judges ii. 13, vi. 25, 26, 30, ix. 4, 46; 1 Kings xiv. 24; 2 Kings xxiii. 7). The repeated admonitions to the Israelites to beware of the neighbourhood of the Canaanites are a proof of their weakness

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<sup>1</sup> We must have in view that the Hebrew word בְּרַבֵּר (counsel), rendered in the Russian edition of the Synod by the expression ПО СОВѢТУ (by the advice), and in the Greco-Slavonic κατά τὸ ρήμα ΠΟ ΛΟΓΕΩΣ (by the word), has in reality a much broader signification. A simple counsel is expressed by the word עֲצָה (2 Sam. xvi. 23; 1 Kings i. 12); but בְּרַבֵּר signifies always in the Old Testament the powerful voice of God or the command of a prophet (1 Kings viii. 1, xx. 35; 1 Chron. xxi. 19; 2 Chron. xxix. 15, xxx. 12), which is absolutely fulfilled by the one to whom it is given; therefore Balaam's advice to the Midianites may have appeared to them as the Word of God. In the meantime, it may have also inspired those of the Israelites whose inclinations were sensual with an unconquerable attraction to the Moabite and Midianite women, so that they could not resist their charms; in reality, this beauty and attraction may have been only in the imagination of the Israelites, excited by a suggestion unknown to them, in other words, a hallucination called forth by the influence of the sorcerer. But as this hallucination was accompanied by a sexual attraction, and the possibility of its satisfaction was at hand, the plan succeeded, and the friendship was fully concluded, so that both tribes had no more reason to fear the Israelites; but both Balaam and his allies were mistaken in their calculations: there remained amongst the Israelites men steady enough in their convictions to resist every temptation. Those holy men, such as Moses, Phinehas, and many others, were invulnerable to sinful hypnotism, and struggled against the voluptuous inclinations aroused amongst their countrymen by the witchcraft of the soothsayer. This opposition ended by the slaying of the adulterers, and put a stop to the dangerous friendship with the Midianites and to the plague, which had begun among the Israelites (Num. xxxi. 16).

<sup>2</sup> Troitzky, T. G., *Religious, Social, and Political Condition of the Hebrews in the Time of the Judges.*

in this respect (Exod. xxiii. 32, 33; Deut. vii. 2, ix. 3, xii. 2). This weakness was also the cause of the present disastrous connection between the sons of Israel and their enemies; it is probable that the Israelites were tired of their long wanderings in the desert, but the principal part in this sad and criminal matter was evidently skilfully played by the Midianites.<sup>1</sup>

It is very possible that a friendly embassy preceded the invitation; after that followed the courteous proposal of taking part in a national festival, which might have appeared harmless to the younger part of the Hebrew nation. On their side the Midianites were so thoroughly convinced of the efficacy of Balaam's counsel, that they were quite sure that the presence of the Israelites at these festivals would alone be sufficient for their sensuality to get the upper hand, and make them bow down before Baal-peor.<sup>2</sup>

All that Balaam had foreseen happened. The feasts in honour of the Israelites rendered the friendly intercourse still closer; Balaam probably took part in these feasts as an honoured and serviceable guest. And then '*the people began*

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<sup>1</sup> The Midianites played the principal part in the corruption of the Israelites. The daughters of Moab are only mentioned in the first verse of Num. xxv.; the depraved woman spoken of in vers. 6, 15, was a Midianite; in vers. 16-18 of the same chapter Moses transmits the order of the Lord '*to vex the Midianites, and smite them, for they vex you [Israel] with their wives, where-with they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor.*' The Midianite women are also accused of having caused the children of Israel to commit trespass against the Lord (Num. xxxi. 16). The Moabites were not only delivered from the vengeance of the Israelites—the war of revenge was led only against the Midianites—but this crime is not even mentioned amongst the misdeeds enumerated in Deut. xxiii. 3-5, although it was important to give powerful reasons for excluding them for ever from the congregation of the Lord; therefore, the part taken by the Moabites in this matter must have been partial and personal, whilst the plan of depraving the Israelites by the Midianites was one in which the whole nation participated, and it was accomplished *publica auctoritate*. The Midianites were the only ones who acted unanimously, therefore they alone incurred a national sin. If the daughters of Moab were mentioned in xxv. 1, it is because the Moabites were the principal nation of the federation, so that in a broader sense Moab embraced the Midianites (Hengstenberg, *Bil.* pp. 219, 220).

<sup>2</sup> Kurtz, *Gesch. d. a. B. ii.* p. 514.

*to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab, . . . and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor'* (Num. xxv. 1-3); and some of the more shameless of the sons of Israel, such as Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites, brought the daughters of Midian and Moab to the Israelite camp to commit open whoredom (Num. xxv. 6, 8, 14, 15). The consequences of such a dissolute life did not fail to appear very soon; as a punishment the Lord smote the Israelites with the plague, which carried away twenty-four thousand victims (Num. xxv. 9).

The question, however, involuntarily arises, Why is Balaam not once mentioned in the melancholy narrative of the twenty-fifth chapter of the Book of Numbers? How could a person who had played, if not a direct, at least an important, part in this affair have been passed over in complete silence? The only possible explanation would be 'that as the author of the Pentateuch introduced Balaam with a particular object, he did not find it necessary to comment upon his subsequent conduct; he did not stand in any other relation to Balaam, and ignored him now as if he had never mentioned him before. He reserved to himself the freedom of mentioning him as far as he thought necessary in relation to the events which had taken place; evidently the historian considered the part played by Balaam a very secondary one, and only worthy of a passing notice. The central point of the narrative is that which may serve to the Church for edification, that is, the disclosure of Israel's sin, and the Lord's righteous judgment in the punishment of the depraved and the depravers.<sup>1</sup> The character itself of the author of the Pentateuch also partly gives a clue to this reticence. 'He is always very sparing of mentioning facts which have no direct relation to his theme, but have only the interest for curiosity or even for satisfying a trivial, perverted historical taste. A few examples will illustrate how far this

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<sup>1</sup> Hengstenberg, *Bil.* pp. 219, 220.



brevity was carried. In Exod. iv. 20 it is mentioned that Moses, in returning from Midian to Egypt, took his wife and sons with him; this was necessary for the comprehension of a circumstance of importance to the whole Pentateuch, described in verses 25, 26, of the fourth chapter, and it is only for this reason that he mentions his family; after that he omits to mention that he has sent them back, out of fear of their being a hindrance to his mission, and it is quite accidentally that we hear of their return when Moses' father-in-law brought his wife and sons to him in the wilderness (Exod. xviii. 2-7). Another example, the death of Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, is mentioned in Gen. xxxv. 8, with the indication of her place of burial, as important in the sense of an edifying and blessed reminiscence of the times of the patriarchs; but how Deborah came to Jacob is never mentioned, as it was a fact which had no importance in the eyes of the author.<sup>1</sup> It is also possible that when Moses related this melancholy event he did not yet know of the insidious counsellor who had instigated the Midianites. It was only some weeks later, after their defeat, that the fact of Balaam's participation may have become known through the captive Midianite maidens.

As it is, there is no doubt that the counsel of perverting the Israelites came from Balaam, and the consequences of the Israelites' licentiousness were very soon openly manifested, and in a manner most satisfactory to their foes. At the time when the sons of Israel were continuing their unexpected friendly intercourse with the two above-mentioned tribes around the enticing flesh-pots and under the shady trees, the plague had already broken out in the Israelite camp; the people died by hundreds, and the rejoicings gave place to despair; the great prophet and the elders were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation (Num. xxv. 6);

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<sup>1</sup> Hengstenberg, *Bil.* pp. 218, 219.

and the Lord, by the hand of Phinehas, put a stop to this insidious, dangerous friendship and ordered Moses '*to vex the Midianites and smite them*' (xxv. 17). Some time after twelve thousand men were sent by command of the Lord to avenge the death of the sons of Israel, who had perished in the plague, '*and they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses; and they slew all the males. And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword*' (Num. xxxi. 7, 8).

This punishment was evidently quite unexpected by the Midianites, who were in the full security of their newly established friendship with Israel. They were taken unawares and slaughtered like oxen in a field. Thus also perished with them, and amongst them, from a stroke of the sword, the captured<sup>1</sup> Mesopotamian Soothsayer Balaam, because he had not ceased to go against God's blessed people (Num. xxii. 12), and against the Word of God (Num. xxii. 12, 32), and because he had come to the land of Moab with the stubborn design of smiting the people of God with a deadly curse. For the Lord 'disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. They meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope in the noonday as in the night' (Job v. 12-14). So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish (Job viii. 13).

#### THE MERITS OF BALAAM

§ 2. The preceding narrative of the deeds of the renowned Mesopotamian Soothsayer Balaam would be both incomplete

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<sup>1</sup> Vlastov, *Sacred Chronicles*, iii., notes to the thirty-first chapter, ver. 8, and Soliarsky, *Diction.* v. p. 191, see the words 'wile,' or 'anare.'

and insufficiently clear if we did not submit the personality of this remarkable man to more serious consideration than that which is generally adopted; namely, if we did not try to find out in what relation he stood to the kingdom of the sons of God (Rom. viii. 14; Gal. iii. 26) and to the sons of disobedience (Col. iii. 6; Eph. v. 6).

It is evident from the history itself of his call to curse the Israelites that this man was a worshipper of the one true God (Num. xxii. 8, 19, xxiii. 3); that he recognised his dependence on Jehovah's will (Num. xxii. 13, 18, 38, xxiii. 8, 12, 19, 20, 26, xxiv. 13) even in his magic practices; on the other hand, the Lord appeared to him in his dreams (xxii. 9-12, 20), sent His Angel to instruct him (xxii. 22-35), revealed to him His will by means of voices and visions in a state of wakefulness (xxiii. 4, 5, 16, xxiv. 2, 4, 16), and evidently listened in general to his prayers (Deut. xxiii. 4, 5; Josh. xxiv. 9, 10). Balaam was deemed worthy of Divine revelations like a true prophet (xxiii. 5, 16, xxiv. 2); he declared wonderful prophecies (xxiii. 7-10, 19-24, xxiv. 5-9, 17-24). By his capacity of receiving revelation in dreams and visions (Num. xii. 6) he is like unto the true prophets and the believing friends of the righteous Job (Job iv. 12-16, xxxiii. 14-18). The contents of his prophecies do not differ from the prophecies of the real prophets. The Lord of creation is represented in them as the true God (אֱלֹהִים, Num. xxii. 9, 10, 12, 20, 38); strong (אֱל, Num. xxiii. 19, xxiv. 8, 16, 24); Most High (עֲלִיּוֹן, xxiv. 16; cf. Ps. vii. 17, lxi. 3, xxi. 7; Dan. vii. 22-25); Almighty (שַׁדַּי, Num. xxiv. 16); unchangeable (Num. xxiii. 19); and ever living (יְהִיָּה, Num. xxii. 8, 13, 18, 19, 34, xxiii. 12, xxiv. 1). Balaam's prognostication of the destinies of Israel refers to the most distant periods and forms, and constitutes a sort of outline of universal history, conceived in the sense of a preparation of mankind for eternity. Balaam's predictions, clothed in the form of lively images of social and political prosperity,

differ entirely by the transparency of their direct signification from the dark and ambiguous sayings of the false prophets. In a word, Balaam acknowledged the one true God, was deemed worthy of His mysterious revelations, and was inspired by the prophetic spirit.

However strange it may be to meet with so remarkable a man in the midst of the corruption of the Mesopotamian nations, it is still stranger that in spite of such intercourse with God, Balaam, besides other wicked actions, should have stained his life by a terrible sin (cf. Matt. xviii. 6, 7)—that of tempting the weak sons of Israel to commit whoredom and trespass against the Lord in the matter of Baal-peor (Num. xxv. xxxi., 16). It thus becomes evident that Balaam's character presents a strange mixture of sharply contrasting manifestations of good and evil, light and darkness.

In reality, great importance need not be attached to the fact that Balaam was not considered worthy not only of the appellation נָבִיא (prophet), but not even of that of רֹאֶה or הוֹחֵם (seer), and was stamped with the name הַקֹּסֵם (kosem), sorcerer, soothsayer (Josh. xiii. 22). It is true that the name הַקֹּסֵם is generally given to those who practise the art of divination; but the word נָבִיא, except its special signification—the name of a man sent by God to prophesy—had besides the general sense of a powerful seer, or a man capable of divining (1 Sam. ix. 9), giving signs and working miracles (Deut. xiii. 1, 2, xviii. 20, 22). In the prophecies of Jeremiah (xiv. 13-16, xxiii. 9, 34) the name נָבִיא (prophet) is even given to false prophets, who lie in the name of God, *'who prophesy a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart'* (Jer. xiv. 14; cf. with xxiii. 16-26). In the prophet Micah (iii. 5) the word נְבִיאִים means prophets *'that make the people err'*; in the seventh verse, instead of נְבִיאִים, the words הוֹחֵם and קֹסֵם are used as synonyms; and, in the eleventh verse, the divinations נְבִיאִים, made for money, are

called יִקְסֵם, divine (falsely). The word קֹסֵם is used in the same synonymous sense of 'prophet,' of a man with a quick, prudent mind, in the prophecies of Isaiah (iii. 2). Therefore, if Balaam is compromised by the word קֹסֵם, it is only so far as every קֹסֵם (soothsayer), (as some נְבִיאִים), had in view, not spiritual direction, but the service of purely material worldly interests.

Further, Balaam has been accused of conjuring and even trickery, because he went לִקְרַת נְחָשִׁים, 'to meet the prophetic serpent,' that is to say, he occupied himself with divining the destinies of separate individuals and whole nations by peculiar phenomena of the surrounding nature (Gen. xxx. 27, xliv. 5, 15; 1 Kings xx. 33). The word נְחָשִׁים, properly speaking, can only be prejudicial to Balaam's fame if, under the word נְחָשִׁים, is understood the 'spirit working in the children of disobedience' (Eph. v. 6, vi. 12). But if we are to understand under the word נְחָשִׁים (according to the Septuagint, *οἱ οἰωνοί*), auguries or particular significative phenomena, which, according to the opinion of the ancients, were concealed in some of the evident manifestations of Divine life (such as thunder, lightning, the flight of large birds, the sounds of invisible voices, mighty tempests, and other exceptional events), it is known that the Israelites themselves, in the person of some of their remarkable men, sought for signs of the Divine will in similar manifestations. Thus, when Saul concluded from God's silence to his appeal (1 Sam. xiv. 37) that some of the people were arousing Jehovah's wrath, he humbly asks God to show His will by a sign (ver. 41); and then when Saul and his son Jonathan were convicted of offence, the king proposed that the Divine will should be ascertained by casting lots between him and Jonathan (ver. 42), and Jonathan was taken (cf. 2 Sam. v. 23, 24; Gen. xliv. 5; 1 Sam. x. 19; Josh. vii. 7). Similarly to this, Balaam sought (Num. xxiii. 4, 5, 16), by means of נְחָשִׁים, revelations in the surrounding nature not 'of the ancient

serpent,' but of the one true God, Who revealed Himself to him by some comprehensible signs, and put His word in Balaam's mouth, in virtue of the general law by which, at the appointed time, He sends signs to show the future (Matt. xxiv. 29). Finally, if נחשים is forbidden in Deut. xviii. 10-14, as well as other practices of divination and witchcraft, the principal reason of this prohibition is, that these means presupposed a pantheistic or polytheistic point of view, deprived of all moral principle, which, instead of strengthening spiritual intercourse with the one righteous Father, only confirmed the faith in false gods, and established a purely physical relation of the Deity to the world, which cannot by any means be applied to Balaam with his national monotheism.

Added to all this, Balaam is accused of two grievous (sins) matters—cupidity and disobedience. According to Deut. xxiii. 4, Balaam was hired for reward by the Moabites to curse Israel (cf. Num. xxii. 7), and the Apostle Peter affirms that this wonderful soothsayer '*loved the wages of unrighteousness*' to madness (2 Peter ii. 15, 16), and '*ran greedily after reward*' (Jude 11). This circumstance is not mentioned openly in the Old Testament, but it is very evident from the actions of the son of Beor. For though Balaam resisted the first temptation and refused to follow the Moabite princes, notwithstanding the gold offered to him (Num. xxii. 13), he evidently only thus acted out of fear and most unwillingly; so that, at the second appeal of the Moabites, he could no longer resist the promised gifts. He appealed once more to the Lord for permission to follow the Moabites; and notwithstanding the ambiguous answer (ver. 20) he received, he departed with the firm intention of fulfilling Balak's culpable desire (vers. 21, 22, 32). But when the Divine Spirit changed the mighty breath of his lips into a blessing to the Israelites, then, allured by the glitter of silver and gold (cf. xxii. 18, xxiv. 13), he went against

the voice of the Lord, and by his magic art instigated the Midianites and Moabites to entice the sons of Israel into taking part in their dissolute (religious) festivals, and by this means became the cause of great sorrow to the sons of Jacob (Num. xxv., xxxi. 16). It is true that Balaam's love of lucre may be justified by the general moral standard of that period, when cupidity was not considered a crime, when the frequent occasions of receiving generally admitted offerings developed first the inclination, then the habit, and finally the passion for them; but this is only an explanation, and not a justification of this evil. Therefore Balaam appears on one side a sincere believer, and on the other a mercenary and obstinate son of disobedience to the Divine commands. What was he really? The personality of Balaam, like that of King Solomon, taken from the brief Bible narratives, places the commentator in a difficult position and presents a problem that is not easy to solve. This is confirmed by the sharply defined differences of opinion of the various investigators of the question. 'While Josephus (*Antiq.*, 4, 6, 2, 6, 13) calls Balaam a splendid soothsayer (*μάντις ἀριστος*), and hardly blames his disastrous counsel as reprehensible, Philo judges him much more severely (*Op. ed. Hesych.* pp. 168, 318, 405, 643 *et seq.*, 1076). According to his opinion, this soothsayer was well versed in all kinds of magic lore and far-famed; but except his beautiful words concerning Israel, he was a sophist, a madman, an atheist, an exorcist who occupied himself with the flight of birds and other falsehoods, and was simply a hypocrite in his relations to God. This opinion is corroborated by the later Hebrews, *e.g.* the later Targumists, who always plainly call him a sinner, a criminal, an impious man, and an exorcist (*e.g.* notes to the Book of Num. xxiii. 9, 10, 21, 24, 25, xxix. 2; Gen. xii. 3, xxvii. 29; Exod. ix. 21), and the Talmudists, who place him as an example of impiety in contrast to Abraham, the representative of godliness and piety (*Pirk., Abth.* 5, 49;

Sanhedrin, 10, 2). Some authors, however, find it possible to represent him as a great prophet amongst the heathens (Pes., Num. xxiv. 2), but deriving his great power from the demons (Eisenmenger, *Entd. Judent.* i. p. 362, ii. 439 *et seq.*). This opinion predominates amongst the Hebrews. The writers of the New Testament also judge Balaam unfavourably; and, accusing him of madness, iniquity, and venality (2 Peter ii. 15, and others; Jude 11), recall as a reproach that he taught '*the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication*' (Rev. ii. 14). Balaam is considered in the light of a diviner, a magian, and a prophet of the devil by most of the fathers of the Church; for instance, St. Ambrose, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Basil the Great, St. Cyril, St. Augustine, and the Blessed Theodoretus. Other teachers of the Church, such as Tertullian and St. Jerome, are more indulgently disposed towards him (Möbius, *Historia Bileami*, p. 33 *et seq.*). Later theologians also differ in their opinions of Balaam's personality (Calvin, Brentano, Marcus, Olearius, Witsius in *Misc. sacr. b.* p. 177 *et seq.*). Some look on him as a true prophet who had his vices, for instance, avidity, and especially sinned in the matter of the perversion of the Israelites to idolatry and debauchery (Num. xxxi. 16; Luthardt, Drusius, Herlach, Möbius, Osiander, Clericus, Deiling, *Obs. Sacr.* iii. p. 81 *et seq.*; Buddeus, *Hist. eccl.* v. i. ed. 600, etc.). Russian theologians take the same point of view (e.g. the Archpriest Heraskov in his book, *Guide to the Systematic Reading of the Pentateuch of Moses*, ed. 4, 1888). The latest Western commentators represent Balaam as an ambitious and covetous man, in whom existed the elements of the knowledge and fear of God, and to whom through the Spirit of God were granted moments of luminous contemplation; he was, however, wanting in deep piety, and did not possess a steady, all-embracing prophetic gift (Hengstenberg, Reinke, Baumgarten, Kurtz). Others saw in the personality of Balaam a mixture of reverence



for God and heathenish inclinations, real prophetic gifts and sorcery; they regarded him as rapacious, inconstant, and dependent upon external circumstances (Tholuck); to others again he appeared covetous, proud of his gift of penetration, a gifted and able diviner, whose worship of Jehovah was insincere (Steidel). Some investigators call Balaam an ambitious and cunning hypocrite, who acted against his own convictions (Hartmann, *On the Prophet Micah*, p. 243 *et seq.*), or an ordinary soothsayer and a wicked deceiver'<sup>1</sup> (Rosenmüller).

Such a divergence of opinions doubtlessly proceeds from two reasons: Firstly, in judging of Balaam's moral qualities no one has thought it necessary to determine a certain criterion or measure of appreciation; secondly, the significance of psychical peculiarities as a condition to the reception of Divine revelations has not been clearly represented.

In fact, although every investigator of the Bible knows that the Divine law must be considered as the real standard of human merit, there are very few who have a right conception of the conditions or manner in which this ideal measure should be applied to humanity.

Western theologians are inclined to determine a man's moral worth by confronting all his actions with the Divine law; Eastern orthodox theology only by the actions of the last days of his life. The Western churches chiefly take into consideration the predominance of good actions over evil ones during the man's whole earthly life. The fathers and teachers of the Eastern Church, having in view the salvation of the repentant malefactor on the cross (Luke xxiii. 40-43), pronounce judgment only in accordance with the sincerity and the deepness of repentance of a man in the signification of his entire refusal to serve sin in order to fulfil righteousness; so that the time when this crisis takes place is of no particular importance, for even those who enter into the kingdom

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<sup>1</sup> Knobel, *Exeget. Handbuch* xiii. to Num. xxii. 5.

of heaven at the eleventh hour receive the same reward for their labour as those who came in the early morning of their life (Matt. xx. 1-10). This may be explained in the following manner. The human personality represents a constant breathing of life, and is composed of desires, feelings, and thoughts. The aim of life is happiness, good, welfare; therefore man aspires after happiness and good, welfare, and shuns every misfortune, every evil; he aspires to enjoyment, and endeavours by every means to escape suffering.

According to the testimony of the Word of God, the central point of the human personality is in the heart (Gen. xviii. 5; Ps. xxii. 26; Exod. xxxv. 5; Prov. iv. 23); the feelings or the heart are the motives of all human activity (Matt. xv. 17-20; Prov. viii. 5; Isa. xxxvi. 4); conscience is included in the heart (Job xxvii. 6; 2 Sam. xiv. 10; Eccles. vii. 22). Eternal life is welfare in the highest sense; eternal life consists in the knowledge by experience of the one true God, and Jesus Christ sent by Him. '*The knowledge of God consists in keeping His commandments*' (1 John ii. 3), '*and he that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him*' (1 John iii. 24). '*God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him*' (1 John iv. 16). Accordingly, the highest good, or welfare, consists in communion with God. Meanwhile, '*the pure in heart alone shall see God*' (Matt. v. 8), '*without holiness no man shall see the Lord*' (Heb. xii. 14), therefore holiness is an indispensable condition of the highest good, and bears this good in itself. Hence the breath of life, which is the contents and form of a person's character, should lead to the result that all desires, feelings, and thoughts should be penetrated with holiness. Holiness is determined negatively as a complete non-participation in evil, and positively as a complete harmony of wishes and actions with the law of perfect activity.<sup>1</sup> Therefore every transgression of the

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<sup>1</sup> Archbishop Philaret, *Dogmatic Theology*, i. p. 56, § 34.

Divine law already constitutes a deviation from good, an estrangement from the life of God, the possibility of a further fall into sin. Repentance of the sin committed is a return to the former right path. A man dying in a sinful frame of mind is a sinner, and the slippery path of perdition further awaits him; a man dying repentant may, on the contrary, hope to be numbered amongst the community of the sons of God, for repentance is the first step towards an approach to God. *'The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all My statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. . . . But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die'* (Ezek. xviii. 20-22, 24).

Therefore the eternal blessed life in God is the aim of man's existence, and also the criterion of his moral worth. Communion with this life depends upon the character of the last moments of our earthly life. The moral appreciation from the point of view of revelation does not take into consideration the whole human life, nor actions in general, but only the actions of the last days of our earthly life, preceding the immediate separation of the soul from its bodily covering. Such a moral appreciation is a definite one, and averts different misunderstandings concerning the merits of many historical personages. It is sufficient to know the deeds of the latter days of some historical celebrity, his thoughts, cares, and hopes, to have sufficient materials for the just appreciation of his character. This explains why the Church

recognises the holiness and prophetic qualities of King David, notwithstanding his fall (2 Sam. xi., xxiv.; Mark xii. 36), and recognises Constantine the Great as equal to the apostles, although some of the actions committed by him were most unrighteous, such as the murder of his son, and so on. But for various reasons this point of view is not adopted in the science of history, and is very seldom applied where it is necessary by the theologians of the Western churches. Therefore, in the present case, the majority of Balaam's commentators (all Protestants) conformed their appreciation of his character according to the whole sum of his actions, which are known to us, and according to the qualificative proportion of good to evil. Thus the worshippers of the supernatural numbered Balaam amongst the prophets; and, to justify this opinion, especially put forward his monotheism and his prophecies, and tried to diminish as far as possible the sin of his evil deeds. Others having in view the condemnatory judgments of the New Testament, exclusively put forward his evil side, his disobedience, his cupidity, and sorcery. They attached no importance to the soundness of his faith, and tried to explain his prophecies as a purely mechanical reflection of Divine thoughts in his spirit, so that Balaam was represented by them as a real son of perdition, the type of an atheist. To put an end to these discussions, which might have lasted indefinitely, and in order to form once for all a definite appreciation of Balaam, some commentators, like Hengstenberg, Kurtz, and Keil, found that the truth lay in the middle course, and represented Balaam both as a heathen soothsayer and a prophet of Jehovah.

However, it is easy to see that such a definition is in reality a characteristic, but not an estimation of Balaam's personality; for to recognise God as the only Creator of the world, to prophesy and even to work miracles by the name (power) of Jehovah, does not yet mean to be holy and righteous in the eyes of God. According to the Gospel of St. Matthew (vii. 22,

23), the Lord rejects those who prophesy and do wonderful works in His Name if they lead an iniquitous life. On the other hand, Balaam acted iniquitously (2 Peter ii. 16) in consciously disobeying the Lord and instigating the Midianites and Moabites to entice the sons of Israel to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor (Num. xxv., xxxi. 16; Rev. ii. 14, 15): *'for rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry'* (1 Sam. xv. 23). But the Lord placed a stumblingblock before Balaam, and 'he turned away from his righteousness, and committed iniquity, and died in it unrepentant' (Ezek. xviii. 24, 26). The Lord taught him by words and visions, by the wonderful speech of the ass and the terrible apparition of the Angel with the naked sword (Num. xxiv. 4, 16, xxii. 22-35). By the sword of the Israelites (Num. xxxi. 8; Josh. xiii. 22) the Lord came upon Balaam as a thief, because he had forgotten that which he had received and heard, and did not hold fast and repent (Rev. iii. 3). The wickedness of his impenitence could not be lessened by the soundness of his faith, nor even his elementary fear of God, nor by his compassion for those in misfortune; for from the point of view of the aim of human existence—that is, to be in eternal blessed communion with God—this indecision, or lukewarmness, leads to being rejected of God (Rev. iii. 16). Finally, Balaam is not only not numbered by the Holy Church amongst the community of saints, but he does not even deserve the name of a prophet, because he is not called נביא, nor חֹזֶה, or רֹאֶה, but קֹסֵם (kosem). It is true that the Apostle Peter calls Balaam *προφήτης*, but this word may have had in his mouth the generally adopted signification in the heathen world taken in the sense of diviner, poet. It is thus used by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to Titus i. 12 (cf. [in the Septuagint] Deut. xiii. 2, 4, 5, xviii. 20, 22; Jer. xiv. 13-15; Micah iii. 5-7, in reference to false prophets). On the contrary, the word נביא (Septuagint, *προφήτης*) was specially used by the Hebrews to express those men chosen of God,

who were in direct intercourse with Jehovah, and were the messengers of Divine revelation. They revealed the great idea of the kingdom of God and of salvation, and were distinguished by the holiness of their lives. 'In them were personified all the force and elevation of the religious moral feeling of the chosen people of God. Externally, they played amongst the Hebrew nation the part of, what we now term, public men, representatives of public opinion, social guides; with this difference, however, that no other nation ever possessed public men with such peculiar characteristics of activity.'

'These social workers, who moved the thoughts and guided the life of the Hebrew nation, continued the work of the prophet lawgiver, elucidated still further the great idea of monotheism, and widened the religious feelings of their countrymen, so as to divest religion of lifeless formalism and the soulless fulfilment of outward forms. Their doctrine of God as the most perfect spiritual Being is indisputably the highest of all the noblest thinkers of the ancient world. The constant object of their inspired word was to penetrate into the human soul, and its moral condition, to elevate and renew it. It is from this religious and moral point of view that these proclaimers of Israel consider the destiny of their people both in the past and in the future. But it is not this alone which raises them above the usual promoters of new ideas and awakeners of national life. The thought of these men, taught by God Himself, was wholly bent upon the future. The ideal of life to which they direct the consciousness and the life of their people is in the future. They are not only preachers of the pure teachings of God's Word, and of morality, but prophets, in the proper sense of the word; that is to say, foretellers of future events. They have in view the present, but they always direct it towards the great future, which rises before their eyes. By rejecting the faults of the present they prepare the outlines of a new, a yet ideal future, of a new and perfect order of moral life, which they clearly realised

themselves, but of which the mass of the nation had no presentiment.<sup>1</sup>

קוסמים, the soothsayers, had quite an opposite aim in life. Like all heathens, they existed exclusively for the service of material interests. Heathenism, out of fear of bodily death, knew of no service other than that of Mammon, and its only ideal was a long life, without trouble, sorrow, and family losses, spent in plenty and debauchery. Nobody gave a thought to the purification of the heart or justification before God; therefore spiritual education did not enter into the sphere of the soothsayers, their service was wholly devoted to material necessities. The soothsayers' profession was therefore the more criminal, because by attributing their own presentiments and foresight to Divine revelation they represented the God of holiness as the minister of sin. While the prophets persistently declared that man cannot live by bread alone, that the ideal life consists in the enjoyment of the grace of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter i. 10-13), the soothsayers, on the contrary, tried to strengthen the people in the false notion that food and drink are the essence of life, therefore they perverted humanity and confirmed it in materialism (Isa. xxviii. 7; Jer. xxiii. 14, 15; cf. Jer. xiv. 13).<sup>2</sup> There is no doubt that Balaam, like any other קוסם, applied his wonderful magic gift to no other end but that of material welfare for himself or others, and that he thought little of righteousness and holiness. That earthly prosperity was for Balaam the Alpha and Omega of existence is evident from the fact that he showed himself ready, out of pity for the Moabites, to doubt the justice of the heavenly Father of nations, and vainly desired to cause harm to the chosen people in direct opposition to the Lord's will (Num. xxii. 5-35). He cannot

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Chrysanthus, *Religions, etc.*, iii. pp. 295, 296.

<sup>2</sup> For details, see article 'The False Prophets of the Old Testament,' by the Rev. V. Shingarev, *Journal Viera i Razum* ('Faith and Intellect'), 1897, vol. i. part ii. p. 229.

even be compared to the seers of Israel, *חֹזֵה* and *חָזָה*, who at times appeared quite unexpectedly in the history of the chosen nation (1 Sam. ii. 27-36, ix. 6-12; 1 Kings xiii. 1-10); for each of these seers, characteristically called *men of God*, made his appearance with the object of reproving unrighteousness and for instruction, moved by zeal for the fulfilment of Jehovah's sacred commandments (1 Sam. ii. 27-36; 1 Kings xiii. 1-10).

Thus Balaam does not merely not belong to the fellowship of the holy prophets, but he does not even deserve the name of man of God (in the sense of being pleasing to God), and hardly that of a foreteller. But this leads to the question, How could he then have become the organ of revelation of the glorious coming of the Messiah, and are similar persons to be met with in the history of Israel?

1. Revelation, as the source of religion, supposes One Who reveals and another who receives revelation. Every revelation by its substance constitutes something new to him who receives the revelation, and the manner in which it enters into the perception of the receiver may be called '*suggestion*.' Revelation generally only consists in that which is voluntarily revealed, namely, the moral contents of the spirit as a self-cognisant sensitive will. Inanimate objects, or the movement of matter, can only be observed and experimented upon under the condition that the investigator has the wish and the capacity of doing so. The life of the spirit, as that of a living intelligent being, presents itself as to wishes, feelings, and intentions, as a monad shut up in itself, which only opens of its own free will, which is governed by the longing for welfare and the avoidance of suffering. '*For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?*' (1 Cor. ii. 11.) Only so far as the man or the finite spirit is the offspring of another Spirit, so is his life proportionately dependent upon this other Spirit, and this dependence is unavoidably accompanied by the disclosure of



the innermost parts of the finite spirit, either for the satisfaction of wants which arise within, or as an involuntary disclosure of impressions received from the outer world. It is not thus with the infinite, independent Spirit; on the contrary, the desires, feelings, and intentions of Him Who hath life in Himself, from Whom everything proceeds, and to Whom everything aspires, might have remained for ever an unrevealed, an impenetrable secret. The signification of the life of creation and of humanity might have remained an unsolved enigma, not only for the heathen, but for all mankind; for the life of creation, which is accessible to our understanding, refers to the inward life of the Deity nearly in the same degree as the few visible movements and conditions of our physical organism refer to the continuous, infinite, and innumerable inward acts of the will, sensations, and thoughts of our spirit. Therefore, the communion of a Perfect Spirit with His created spirits at any given moment constitutes a *revelation* in the true sense of the word, for '*the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God*' (1 Cor. ii. 11). The Creator of the universe lives in Himself a life of holy beatitude and *perfect joy* (Matt. xxv. 21; John xv. 11). In relation to creation He is a righteous Father, the fulness of love, and the good Shepherd. The aim and the signification of life for the created spirits consists in the knowledge by experience of the eternal life of the Deity, that is to say, the communion of perfect joy (John xvi. 22, xvii. 13; Rom. vi. 23). The whole economy of our salvation from the days of Adam had this sole aim in view, and by its outward form it represents a mystery<sup>1</sup> in which Christ is

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<sup>1</sup> The word 'mystery,' *μυστήριον* (Matt. xiii. 11; Luke viii. 10; 1 Cor. ii. 7; 2 Thess. ii. 7; Rev. x. 7), means a conglomeration of actions and events which have a hidden, inward meaning, invisible to the bodily eye and to empty curiosity, but revealed to the initiated who seek it with humble faith by means of particular teaching. Thus, the totality of God's merciful and chastising actions, all the Divine economy, constitute *μυστήριον*, a mystery (1 Cor. ii. 7; Ephes. i. 9; 1 Tim. iii. 16). The inner sense of this mystery, as the communion of *all* mankind, and not of the Hebrews *alone*, in the Divine

concealed, '*the power of God, the wisdom of God, the righteousness of God, sanctification and redemption*' (Rom. iii. 21-25; 1 Cor. i. 24-30, ii. 7, 8). The communication of this mystery forms the subject of God's revelation in the prophets, in His Divine Son, and in the holy apostles (Heb. i. 1; 1 Cor. i. 10; 1 Peter i. 10-12; Ephes. iii. 3, 4, 9). Therefore the communication of the joyful tidings of our deliverance from sin or salvation from the consequent evil forms the substance of Revelation. According to the generally adopted opinion, the reception of revelation necessitates, as in suggestion, that there should be an inward harmony between the receiver (through faith) and the Revealer—sanctity; but this opinion demands a more precise commentary. Direct intercourse with God must be the ideal of every believer. Moses wished 'that all the Lord's people were prophets' (Num. xi. 29). The prophet Joel foretold the outpouring of God's Spirit upon all flesh, and that all those who enter the kingdom of the Messiah shall prophesy (Joel ii. 28-32; Acts ii. 16-18). On the other hand, God fills heaven and earth (Jer. xxiii. 24), and dwells in the members of His Church (2 Cor. vi. 16; Lev. xxvi. 11, 12), for in Him we live, and move, and have our being (Acts xvii. 28). However, it would be hardly possible to affirm that every person is capable of being equally and distinctly conscious of the inner feeling through which the Deity reveals itself, and to express this consciousness forcibly and vividly. The

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life, through painful purification from sin, was hidden from ages and generations (Col. i. 26). Its glory in the sense of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Col. i. 27) is declared by the prophets, and was manifested in the life of Christ (Rom. iv. 25; Col. iv. 3; 1 Tim. iii. 16). This life is revealed by God Himself (Luke x. 21; Eph. i. 9, iii. 9) to those that are of the truth (John xviii. 37). In the same manner the conjunction of sinful actions constitutes the mystery of iniquity (2 Thess. ii. 7; Rev. xvii. 6, 7). It should be noticed that the word *μυστήριον* is principally used in the epistles of St. Paul addressed to the Grecian Christians, perhaps because this word, which signified the religious mysteries of the Grecian religion, might be more comprehensible to the Grecian converts, and render clearer to their understanding the signification of the salvation of mankind by the death on the cross of God the Son.

Apostle Paul assures us that as in the living body the various members are adapted to various purposes, so in the Church God, in accordance with His mighty wisdom, has granted peculiar psychical (and physiological) qualities to believers through His Spirit. 'There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. . . . To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy' (1 Cor. xii. 4-10), 'so that not all are apostles, not all are teachers,†not all are workers of miracles, nor do all speak with tongues' (vers. 28, 29). The apostle explains this diversity, so that the aim of every gift is to be profitable to oneself and others, and that 'the selfsame spirit divides to every man severally *as He will*.' This expression—*as He will*—must be understood, however, in the sense of, 'According to the established laws of the bodily and spiritual development of humanity.' According to the opinion of the majority, the Creator communicated those gifts not so much on account of the faith and psychical qualities of the Christians of the early Church, as from the necessity of establishing the truth of Christianity, of showing that Christianity is the only true faith.<sup>1</sup> But the confirmation of Christianity might, at any later period of Church History, have served as a motive for the abundant manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost; for it is difficult to say that any period of history, for instance, the Middle Ages (fifth to sixteenth century), did not need such extraordinary gifts for the diffusion and deepening of the Christian life amongst mankind, and yet those wonderful and saving

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Theophanus, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, xii., p. 388.

manifestations of the Spirit scarcely ever occurred in Europe.<sup>1</sup> Finally, if such gifts of the Spirit, as prophecy, or diversity of languages, depended exclusively on sanctity or some beneficial expediency, and not on something different, there would have been no misunderstandings in the Corinthian Church concerning the application of spiritual gifts, and the apostle would have had no need to write admonitions about the appropriate application of these gifts (1 Cor. xiv.) and the excellence of charity (xiii.). Therefore it is not every soil which is fit for the growth (disclosure) of the seed of God's Word; it requires good soil; *neither is every believer fit for the full reception and vivid manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, but only a believer endowed with peculiar qualities of temperament.*

2. What is, then, this *third condition, or peculiar quality of temperament* (besides holiness and faith) which alone renders possible an exact reception and expression of Divine Revelation? In order to answer this question, we must say a few preparatory words of the manner in which God worked on the human spirit, and in what manner, in what psychical condition, man received the Divine suggestion or inspiration. According to the opinion of Bishop Chrysanthus, the revelation of God to men, chosen by Him, and their spiritual condition at the given moment, should be represented as follows: 'The first men were in direct intercourse with God, and heard His voice with their believing souls (Gen. iii. 8). From that time revelation never ceased, and the chosen ones never left off hearing God's Word and receiving special enlightenment from Him. The Word of God either revealed itself to the spirit, which received enlightenment from above, together with the assurance that the thought and voice were of God Himself (Gen. xv. 1), or it was announced in separate sounds,

<sup>1</sup> To the nations of Europe, in consequence of their spiritual nature, was given the gift of 'the word of wisdom' and 'the word of knowledge' (1 Cor. xii. 8), in the signification of clear and systematic expression in a verbal form, of the religious experiences of Christ's Church—'gifts of *teaching, helping, and of government*' (ver. 28).

as on Mount Sinai, when the people heard the voice of the words of Jehovah from out of the midst of the fire (Deut. iv. 12), and on other occasions (1 Sam. iii. 4; Dan. viii. 16). Sometimes the voice of God was not heard in human speech, but in certain sounds of nature, announcing the presence of God, as in the vision of Elijah, to whom God appeared in 'a still, small voice,' which meant that He is the God of goodness and mercy (1 Kings xix. 12). The Divine enlightenment of God's Spirit was very often received during sleep in the form of peculiar and extraordinary dreams (Gen. xv. 12; 1 Sam. xxviii. 6). There was another form of visions, which differed entirely from dreams: מִרְאָה, מִחְזָה; it was a peculiar condition of the seer, before whose inner gaze there passed a series of different pictures which had mostly a symbolical or prophetic character. Those were more direct revelations of God than in dreams, and they formed the fusion of the human spirit into the realms of Divine life. Finally, those peculiarly chosen of God, like the lawgiver Moses, were deemed worthy of full and direct intercourse with God, conversed with Him face to face and mouth to mouth. This highest form of revelation is, however, the most spiritual and the least subject to outer or material things. It meant the direct knowledge of the Divine thoughts, the direct intercourse of the human spirit with the Spirit of God.<sup>1</sup>

According to the teaching of St. Basil the Great, the 'prophets did not receive the revelation of God through the hearing, but declared the meaning of the word impressed on their mind. We require words to express our thoughts, but God by touching the innermost soul of those worthy impresses in them the vision of His own intentions.' 'But,' says the same father of the Church in another part of His works, 'the impressions that we receive in our dreams may help us to an easier comprehension of prophetic excitation. As the images

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Chrysanthus, *Religions of the Ancient World*, iii. pp. 288, 289.

which have been impressed in our innermost soul appear to us in our dreams, and make us see beautiful towns and countries, or supernatural animals, and hear words which have struck our ear, and not unfrequently remain in the memory, whilst in reality we have neither seen nor heard anything with our bodily senses; so is the mind of holy men filled with Divine words and visions which have impressed themselves either in a state of wakefulness or in sleep, whilst these images have never been transmitted to them by their bodily eyes, nor have any vibrations of the air reached their ears in sounds produced by the clashing of arms. For bodily eyes never saw '*the throne high and lifted, upon which the Lord was sitting,*' which was visible to Isaiah (Isa. vi. 1); but the mind of the prophets contemplated these objects by means of a higher power, whilst the Spirit showed them the nature of God by divination' (*Works of St. Basil the Great*, vol. II. xv. 1-8).

Such are the forms and conditions in which Jehovah revealed His will. They all show a particular action of the Spirit of God on the human soul; either inward, without words or sounds,<sup>1</sup> or outward, by means of human words, or peculiar sounds and natural phenomena.<sup>1</sup> It is now necessary to determine more explicitly the psychical condition of those chosen of God at the moments when they became the recipients of Divine revelation. The question is, Were they in a serene and tranquil state of mind, or in a transport of inspiration carried to a certain degree of self-forgetfulness? The wonderful fact of prophetic inspiration began to excite interest since the first centuries of the Christian era, consequently at the time when the prophetic spirit was yet a living and actual phenomenon, and not only a historical fact. One of the first Christian thinkers who turned his attention to the gift of prophecy was the apologist Athenagoras. He defines prophetic inspiration as an action following

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Chrysanthus, *Religions of the Ancient World*, iii. pp. 289, 290.

upon the dulling of the intellect (*κατ' ἔκστασιν*), whilst he compares the action of the Holy Ghost on the prophets to playing on the flute. Justinus, the philosopher, is of the same opinion. 'The prophetic spirit,' says he, 'descends upon the prophets like the *plektron* on the lyre, and draws from them the desired sounds.' This explanation of prophetic inspiration gives it a passive character. It deprives the prophets of all personal activity, and represents them as passive instruments (of reception and manifestation) of the Holy Ghost, and even, judging by the expression *ἔκστασις*, as acting unconsciously. It would seem that the influence of Plato is reflected in this opinion. He says, 'God, taking away the reason of His servants, speaks Himself through them to us.' Several teachers of the Church hold the same point of view. Tertullian insists upon this idea with particular force, because it coincides perfectly with his Montanist opinions, but the other fathers of the Church, who were exempt from Montanist errors, very naturally protest against this definition; indeed, since the appearance of Montanism, the question of inspiration has entered into a new phase of development. The opinion about prophecy was naturally obliged to take a new direction, in view of the false prophecies which became strongly developed amongst the Montanists, and expressed themselves in ecstatic, artificially-aroused manifestations. There came a series of thinkers amongst the best theologians of the first centuries of our era, who began to explain prophetic inspiration quite differently, and the principle of personal activity and consciousness was brought forward. The ecstatic condition, which was formerly the characteristic expression of prophecy amongst the Montanists, was recognised as the sure sign of false prophecy, and such a condition was declared unworthy of a true prophet, and degrading to prophecy itself. Origen was one of those who maintained with particular force the principle of activity and consciousness in prophecy. He affirmed that the influence of the Holy Spirit

does not arrest the normal psychical activity in man; free will and the power of judgment remain in their normal state. Origen considers a lucid consciousness the surest sign of the highest inspiration, and every darkening of the mind as a positive obstacle. St. Epiphanius, St. Jerome, and St. John Chrysostom energetically maintain the same opinion; they all affirm that prophecy is an inner illumination guided by reasonable consciousness, and can therefore be transmitted to a clear understanding; so that, according to the words of Epiphanius, 'the prophet expressed his thoughts consequently, and spoke from the Holy Spirit coherently.' St. Jerome says the same: 'The prophets did not speak in a state of ecstasy, as Montanus and his mad women rave, not knowing what they say, and teaching others to be ignorant of what they say.' St. John Chrysostom expresses himself still more strongly. He compares prophecy with mantology, and finds an enormous difference between them, which is even expressed in their appellations. The idea of mantology is that of a man who is not in a normal condition, who has lost consciousness, and is in a state of frenzied ecstasy; the word itself, mantology (*μάντις*, from *μαίνομαι*), means 'I am in a frenzy, in an abnormal state of mind.' On the contrary, the word prophet (*προφήτης*)—by its first and general signification—is an orator who pronounces truths, and as such keeps a sound intellect and mental calm. 'Therefore it is natural to the necromancer to lose his self-consciousness, to make unnatural movements, to be convulsed by spasms like a madman. Not so is the prophet: he speaks with lucid consciousness and calm, knowing what he says.'<sup>1</sup> According to the teaching of Bishop Chrysanthus, 'the personal consciousness of the prophets remained unaltered; their psychical condition was not pathological. The Spirit of God acted upon them without stifling their spirit and consciousness. The Spirit of Jehovah comes

<sup>1</sup> Lapoukhine, A. P., *Biblical History of the Old Testament*, iii. pp. 688, 689.



and rests upon them (Num. xi. 17, 25-29; Judg. xiv. 6, 19), but does not dwell in them to the destruction of their personality. It envelopes the human spirit (Judg. vi. 34; 1 Chron. xii. 18), invests it with its strength (2 Chron. xxiv. 20), stimulates it, but does not violate the man's normal condition, nor make him unconscious.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the prophets were not deprived of their consciousness, personal feeling, and activity, even in the contemplation of God as the powerful Ruler of the universe and terrible Judge, even in the state of תרדמה, an extraordinarily heavy sleep or (more exactly) ecstasy. It is the same as a man who does not lose consciousness during his dreams. Those that have been favoured with such conditions recognise that they had a revelation or a vision (Dan. x. 16; Acts xii. 9), express their opinions (Acts x. 12, 14, xxii. 19), and remember these revelations distinctly all their life, and describe them in the minutest details (Acts ix. 3-16, xxii. 6-16; 2 Cor. xii. 2-4). St. Basil the Great speaks as follows in refutation of those who declared that the prophet's mind was dimmed by the spirit during the reception of revelation: 'It is contrary to the promise of God's sending of the Holy Ghost to represent one divinely inspired as one stupefied, so that he should lose his reason at the moment when he receives Divine instruction, and, being useful to others, should be useless to himself. And is it in general rational to suppose that the Spirit of Wisdom should render a man like one deprived of reason, and the Spirit of Knowledge destroy his intelligence? Light does not cause blindness, but, on the contrary, quickens the power of sight given by nature, and the Spirit cannot darken the soul; but, on the contrary, stimulates the mind, purified from the stains of sin, to the contemplation of the ideal' (*St. Basil the Great*, Part II. p. 9).

Although we also recognise with the above-named fathers of the Church the presence of a certain personal activity and

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Chrysanthus, *Religions of the Ancient World*, iii. pp. 302, 303.

clearness of consciousness in the prophets during the reception of revelation, we cannot but admit that the Bible offers many data which justify the points of view of St. Athenagoras, Justinus the Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and (in part) Tertullian.

We must remember, first of all, that the reception of revelation, as of every other action, requires a strained attention. Every man receives with particular intenseness any new, grand, and striking event, occurring independently of his will, and this necessitates a certain passiveness and forgetfulness of self; but these conditions are always insignificant and easily put aside by finely sensitive natures. On the other hand, the revelation of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit, the Comforter, is a fruit of Divine love, which brings gladness (Acts ii. 46); therefore it is not only a simple word, or picture, which is called forth by the breathing of the Comforter, but a certain intense luminous feeling, clothed in the form of definite symbols, sounds, verbal representations or pictures (visions). Accordingly, the receptive organ of the prophets is not the intellect, which is turned to the material by means of the organs of sense, but the heart, as *the issues of life* (Prov. iv. 23), as the centre, where the sensitive will recognises by an inner comprehension, or an inner feeling, the value not only of the influences of inanimate nature, but of the various actions of the spirits of light and darkness.<sup>1</sup> God gave Saul *another heart* (1 Sam. x. 9); *Jeremiah's heart maketh a noise within him, because he has heard the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war* (which he did not hear with his physical senses, because these misfortunes were only expected), *destruction upon destruction is cried* (Jer. iv. 19, 20), *the Word of God was in his heart as a burning fire shut up in his bones, and he was weary with forbearing, and he could not stay* (Jer. xx. 9). *Only the pure in*

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<sup>1</sup> The question of the absolute meaning of the *inner feeling* in the subject of knowledge is discussed in detail in the well-known work of Archbishop Nikanor, *Positive Philosophy and Supermaterial Existence*.

*heart shall see God* (Matt. v. 8); the love of God is shed *in the hearts* of those that believe by the Holy Ghost (Rom. v. 5); God gives the pledge of His Spirit in the *heart*, Christ dwells in the *heart* by faith (Eph. iii. 17); God principally *looks at the heart* (1 Sam. xvi. 7; Rev. ii. 23; Jer. xvii. 10), *touches the hearts* (1 Sam. x. 26). In the same manner the devil put *into the heart* of Judas Iscariot to betray the Lord (John xiii. 2; cf. ver. 27).

Therefore, according to the above-quoted testimonies of the Holy Scriptures, the Divine action on the human spirit is accomplished by action on the heart, in the sense of the *sensitive capacity of the human spirit*, and complete submission to the Divine law, unto the entire subjection of the life to Christ (Gal. ii. 19, 20), and is represented as '*writing of the law in the hearts of men*' (Jer. xxxi. 33). Sensations, according to their force and intensity, are divided into dispositions and affects. 'Disposition is nothing but an accumulation of different separate sensations, caused by the fulfilment of organic processes and the course of ordinary psychical activity. The sensations which form our general disposition (frame of mind) are so feeble and indefinite that we are very often at a loss to determine why we feel joyful or sad at a certain moment. An "affect" (trance) is an exactly opposite state, and represents the highest degree of tension of the sensitive system, when a man is beyond himself and becomes the slave of his feelings.'<sup>1</sup> 'Affects are the tempests and hurricanes of psychical life.'<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, it is evident that every state of inspiration is something different from the usual frame of mind, either by its tension and force, or by its tone (pleasant or unpleasant). A man generally distinguishes the manifestations of his inner world from the impression of his outward surroundings by means of the feeling of resistance; therefore, inspiration, as the action of the Spirit of God

<sup>1</sup> See Kapterev, *Pedagogic Psychology*, p. 359.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 508, § 2.

on the human spirit, is only noticeable when it manifests itself with a certain degree of pressure which is felt as something new and different (distinct from the usual frame of mind). And as the force and depth of feelings partly depend on their novelty, so must every revelation of God, as something quite new, produce a deep and exciting impression on the man who directly receives this revelation, therefore it is accompanied by strong feeling—an 'affect.' The prophets describe this state when it has attained its highest degree of intensity by the words: '*The hand of the Lord*' (power, Deut. xxxii. 36) '*was upon me*' (Isa. viii. 11; Ezek. i. 3, iii. 22, xxxvii. 1; Exod. xxxiii. 22, 23, xxxiv. 8, 28, 29).

'The state of affect is a state of deep concentration on one subject and one feeling. An affect in the sphere of feeling means the same as deep reflection in the sphere of knowledge, and an energetic, tenacious activity (passion) directed to one aim in the sphere of the will.<sup>1</sup> 'Affects throw us into a state of torpor, strike us dumb, interrupt physical and psychical life, or produce violent excitement, accompanied by frantic movements, and a tension of all the forces of the body and the soul.'<sup>2</sup> As, for the representation or feeling of the Deity, there is 'no similitude' (Deut. iv. 12), and it can only be conceived under the form of a reasonable force, therefore, in order for it to attain the same degree of clearness and newness as any object belonging to the external and mechanical sphere of our sensations, a certain shock and excitement of the nervous system is necessary, as in the case of ordinary sensations. For material objects, however, the irritation proceeds from without; it begins from the periphery, and finishes at the centres of the nervous system, whilst for the perception of the Deity the irritation of the nervous system begins in the centre (for God is only seen in a pure heart, Matt. v. 8; Rev. ii. 23), and gradually passes over to the periphery. The sensa-

<sup>1</sup> Kapterev, *Pedagogic Psychology*, p. 511.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 513, § 4.

tion, or more exactly, the irritation of the nervous system is the result of a psychical act. But notwithstanding this difference in the points of departure of the process, the irritation of the nervous system is not the less real; therefore, the voice or the vision which has been impressed within the heart has all the reality of an actual sensation. In this condition a man is dumb and blind to everything that does not concern the object of his affect; and such a state of vigilance, in which a man receives the images which arise from the depths of his soul, and which he assimilates as real objects, whilst he remains insensible to all outward impressions, exactly resembles that peculiar sleep which is called ecstasy. '*I think,*' says St. Basil the Great, '*that the prophets heard the Word of God, not with their physical hearing or by the vibrations of the air, but with the hearing belonging to every reasonable soul, which is reached without any voice.* And that was the case when the ray of true light penetrated the innermost of their souls and enlightened the prophets. Those who heard this voice were *beyond perishable human sensations*, and near leaving their body; for when the soul contemplates the Divine and is gathered into itself through being loosed from its union with the body, it is said that the soul is in a state of ecstasy. But when the soul is occupied with human affairs, or with its inevitable service to the body, or when it is incapable of further stretching up to the highest, then it apparently passes back from without to within,<sup>1</sup> returning to its union with the body as to some house or city' (*Works of St. Basil the Great*, vol. ii. p. 265). Therefore, undoubtedly Abraham before the vision fell into a deep sleep, תרדמה, Septuagint ἄστασις; in the Book of Job (iv. 13, xxxiii. 15) תרדמה is represented as the usual condition

<sup>1</sup> This is literally translated from the works of the Holy Father, and means that the invisible world, seen only by a man in a state of ecstasy, forms an endless outward existence for the bodily envelope, to which man returns when the state of ecstasy is passed; that is, when he begins to look at the world not with his spiritual eye (telescope), but with the usual organs of sight, which are like the windows of the lower story in an observatory.

which precedes visions, a condition which has the character of φόβος, or δεινὸς φόβος, great terror. The holy apostles Peter and Paul received visions in a state of ecstasy (ἐν ἐκστάσει, Acts x. 10, xii. 9, 11, xxii. 17) or *transport*. Before the vision of the Lord's glory on Mount Tabor the apostles *were heavy with sleep*, βεβαρήμενοι ὕπνῳ (Luke ix. 32); *they were sore afraid* (Mark ix. 6) during the vision of the Lord's glory. Peter said, 'It is good for us to be here . . . not knowing what he said' (Luke ix. 33). When the disciples heard the voice of God, 'they fell on their face, and were sore afraid' (Matt. xvii. 6) and only returned to their senses when Jesus touched them (vers. 7, 8). According to the testimony of the God-fearing father, St. Isaac the Syrian, he who is found worthy of Divine inspiration is terrified, and lies like a lifeless body' (Word 16, p. 67), 'and does not simply contemplate the sight of any image of which he has dreamt. When a man is in such a condition he ceases praying; he loses the capacity of moving; he is insensible to feelings of sorrow and joy; he forgets every desire, has neither self-control nor capacity of thought, and is seized with terror by a benumbing astonishment; he remains in his vision without any movement' (p. 68). Revelation, from the point of view of St. Isaac, signifies an apparition, the disclosure of something secret, and its subject is that which is known, experienced, and apprehended by the intellect. The vision occurs in different ways, in images or pictures, as was sometimes the case with the ancients, either in deep sleep or in a state of wakefulness; sometimes distinctly, at other times somewhat dimly and as though in foresight; so that he who receives revelation does not always know whether what he sees is real or a dream (Word 21, p. 108). Revelation does not depend only upon an insistent wish, as some heretics supposed; it depends entirely on the Holy Ghost, and is given for humble purity of heart; in consequence of which, the Apostle Paul calls the state in which he was during the visions of the

third heaven, 'rapture.' 'I was enraptured by rapture,' says he, 'and did not enter with my mind by my will into the vision of the third heaven' (Word 55, p. 305). Therefore he was in a state of amazement and loss of self-possession. 'The impressions which the mind receives by means of the bodily senses may be transmitted again and remain in the realms of matter; but those which arise within the heart are only seen, heard, and felt in the realms of the spirit; and when they return to the body, they are remembered as if they had been seen, but nobody can explain distinctly *in what manner* this has taken place' (Word 55, p. 306).

3. Besides this, the character of the prophets' spiritual condition at the moment when they received revelation may be also explained by the circumstance that these revelations to men chosen by God were generally expressed in a practical form: 'The prophet's speech is poured forth in flowing, measured, logically rhythmical verse, in tones in accordance with the subject which moves him; when he speaks of his mission, his words flow majestically and reverently, and the reader is penetrated to the depths of his soul with a reverent tremor; when, on the contrary, the prophet addresses nations plunged in iniquity and sinful sleep, and announces the approaching retribution of God, his words are threatening and terrible, like a flaming fire, like a hammer which splits the rocks, like the voice of the trumpet sounding at the hour of judgment; when the prophet brings comfort to suffering people, his tones are as gentle and tender as those of a loving mother; the tears which flow from the depths of the prophet's heart are like healing balsam, which alleviates sufferings and cures mortal, gaping wounds; his voice is triumphant like the sound of a victorious, trumpet when he turns from the lamentable calamities of the present and directs his luminous gaze to the future, to the promised covenant, to the coming Messiah; his anguished

tones are silenced, his spirit revives, the flowing tears are dried, and the prophet in his joy forgets all the bitterness of the present and breaks forth into a triumphant hymn. There are pages in the books of the prophets which by their elevation and force of expression have no equals in the poetical literature of all times and nations, and this is comprehensible. The prophets are sacred poets, their productions bear the stamp of holiness and truth, whilst the poetry of other nations is often darkened by superstition, passion, and error. Amongst the outward rhetorical forms, the following are met with in the works of the prophets. Allegories, such as the song of the vineyard, which represents the chosen people; hyperboles, when, for instance, national revolutions and perturbations are represented as the moving of heaven and earth and the darkening and falling of stars; bold metaphors, as, for example, spiritual gifts represented under material forms; Divine inspiration like a stream of water flowing in a parched desert; glory and happiness, as the sun and moon which never set; poetical personifications, when, for instance, the prophet addresses inanimate objects as though they were living persons; such as, "Hearken, Heavens; and listen, Earth"; "The mountains and hills will sing their song to you, and the trees in the field will applaud you," etc.; energetic repetitions, such as, "Comfort, comfort ye, My people;" "O earth! earth! earth! hearken to the Lord's word," etc.; irony, when human weakness is contrasted with the greatness of God. (Shall the axe exalt itself before him who handles it? As if the rod can rise against him who lifts it! or woe to him who contends with his Creator, a broken bit from broken vessels of clay.) Although prophetic speeches are generally distinct from lyrical songs, they often become like them when the prophets quote the national hymns of former times, or compose their own; then their feelings flow deeper, their pictures become more vivid, and the flight of their thoughts bolder. These



inserted hymns are new rays which give a new brilliancy to the picture, new sounds which bring the charm of variety into the whole harmony.'<sup>1</sup>

Such a form of expression of revelation is very important in the present question. It is supposed by some that the prophets communicated the revelations granted to them by God in poetical form on account of its elevation or the suitability of expressing vividly and picturesquely the sacred movements of the religious life of the spirit, which are not always comprehensible to the usual mind; and finally, in view of the powerful influence on the will, in the question of teaching, generally attributed to artistic forms of expression. Such an explanation, however, has nothing analogical in the history of the Church's tuition; for there were many sacred writers who would have liked to express themselves artistically. But it is only a certain number of the Holy Fathers, namely, the Syrian ones (of half-Semitic origin), who have known how to depict their religious experience in vivid and artistic colours: such were John Chrysostom, Ephraim the Syrian, and Isaac the Syrian. There were also many holy men of the clergy and of the laity, but not all had the gift of expressing their religious knowledge in a philosophical (dialectic) and narrative form, which is a peculiar gift of clearness of mind joined to the *condition of a scholarly education*. There are numbers of truly holy men who have not left a single line after them, whilst hundreds of theological works exist written by authors whose lives were far from that of Christ. These facts lead us to the conclusion that, besides the peculiar above-mentioned state of 'affect' of the holy prophets at the moments of receiving Divine revelation, these holy foretellers of the Divine commands by God's special dispensation (1 Cor. xii. 10, 29) differed from other zealous and holy teachers of God's Word, and were distinguished by

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<sup>1</sup> Lapoukhine, A. P., *Biblical History*, pp. 696, 697.

*an ardent (choleric) temperament and innate poetical gift, which gave them the possibility of comprehending clearly and fully the words and apparitions of the Lord, and communicating the revelations which they received to their believing brethren in the form of an entrancing, brilliant, picturesque, and cadenced speech, instead of the calm, colourless, though highly instructive form of some narratives or treatises.*

These two qualities inherent in the holy prophets, namely, *an ardent temperament and poetical gift*, are, according to our opinion, *the conditions owing to which Balaam, the possessor of such qualities* (notwithstanding his criminal cupidity), *showed himself capable of receiving and communicating Divine revelation touching the future destinies of the holy Church.* This capacity was called forth by the peculiar circumstances of his life, as represented in Num. xxii.-xxiv., and Balaam with his sound faith and poetical gift '*heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, and saw the vision of the Almighty*' (Num. xxiv. 4, 16).

As Balaam, notwithstanding his faith, was inclined to serve the flesh and to act iniquitously, so does he involuntarily close his eyes at the moment of celestial inspiration; and notwithstanding his peculiar poetical gift, falls into a trance (Num. xxiv. 3-15); enters into a state of painful ecstasy, and sees the Divine visions (as though) in his sleep (Num. xxiv. 4, 16). This betrays his being one of the heathen seers (*μάντεις*), who received with their poetical instinct fragments of the inward mysterious historical process, which is principally accomplished in human hearts by falling into a peculiar state of ecstasy very similar to the condition of the somnambulist or clairvoyant. Therefore, as the reception of Jehovah's revelation by Balaam was, above all, dependent upon the sensitiveness of his imagination, and did not spring from the nearness of his heart to God, it is quite natural that, as soon as the action of the Spirit of God ceased in Balaam, the latter immediately became the same man as before revelation; that

is, he was moved by the same passions, sympathies, and antipathies as previously.

Thus Balaam's position in relation to the prophets and sons of God was that of a soothsayer having the peculiar gift of becoming for a certain time, by God's special dispensation, the foreteller of His will concerning the future destinies of the chosen people. 'At the moment of his call to the land of Moab he still stood on that lower step of moral and religious development, when it seemed to him that he could mingle two functions together without troubling his conscience, that is, worship the true God and practise the art of magic. He was in the transitory stage from one kind of life to another, and it is only at this moment that it was yet possible for him to unite two conditions which were quite contrary to each other in substance, one of which, in fact, excluded the other, and were perfectly incompatible in their points of view. . . . The reason of such a bifurcation, or duplicity of conduct, has no intellectual basis, neither does it depend on an insufficient right to the reception of true, divine, prophetic inspiration; it exists exclusively in the domains of moral will. Balaam had until then practised magic as a trade in order to earn money, esteem, and renown. But when he became convinced that Jehovah, the God of Israel, was more powerful than the gods of other nations, he turned to Him probably with the hope of thus attaining still more brilliant results and greater profits. Thus he took with himself into his new life the impure, heathen attachment of his heart, which remaining unconquered, therefore became an obstacle to the deeper strengthening and further development of his intercourse with Jehovah. It is true that his motives and inclinations were not devoid of a certain nobility and elevation of purpose; for had it been otherwise, Jehovah would never have revealed Himself to him, nor responded to his appeals. And the apparitions of Jehovah also did not pass entirely without leaving an ennobling and sanctifying influence on the spirit, heart, knowledge, and

wishes of the magian. This is testified by his answer to the ambassadors of Balak, "*If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold,*" etc. (Num. xxii. 18). Nevertheless, his vacillating, and dubious, and double-minded conduct indicates also that the heathen inclinations of his will were not completely suppressed, and therefore he could not entirely give up his former magic practices. These vacillations and duplicity in relation to truth and falsehood, this mixture of mutually incompatible things, could not be lasting and constant, and were only possible for a time—namely, during a transitory period. In the later development of life Balaam would be forced to take up either the one or the other, absolutely and irrevocably. One inclination would have had to be given up for the consolidation of the other. Balaam was at the moment of considering the cross-roads. The force of circumstances had brought him to the point where he had to decide whether the old heathen or the new Divine principle of life was to predominate in him; whether he was to aspire to the service of a true prophet, or return to his old point of view and develop it to decisive animosity against Jehovah, against theocracy, and against the chosen people. This entanglement of circumstances which must serve to the glorification of Jehovah, to the encouragement of Israel, and the subjection of his enemies, was a question of the highest and most decisive importance to Balaam. He fell. His cupidity and ambition were stronger than his aspiration after salvation.<sup>1</sup>

Balaam's extraordinary gifts, the peculiar favour shown by the Lord to him, and the exceptionally strange vicissitudes of his life, render him very similar to two singular men of the Hebrew nation—Samson, the judge, and King Saul. Both were destined by the Lord to glorify Him by saving His people (Judg. xiii. 5, 25; 1 Sam. ix. 16, 17); both were distinguished by their physical superiority (Judg. xvi.; 1 Sam. x. 24); both

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<sup>1</sup> Kurtz, *Geschichte des alt. Bund.* ii. pp. 468, 469.

possessed the gift of prophecy, and the Spirit of God came mightily upon them (Judg. xiii. 25, xiv. 6, 19, xv. 14; 1 Sam. x. 10, xi. 6, xix. 23); both appeared at times to completely forget the Lord's commandments, and wilfully allowed themselves to be allured, without any inner struggle, by the distinctive characteristics of their nature—Samson by the immoderate voluptuousness of his inclinations (Judg. xiv. 1-3, xvi. 4-17), Saul by his obstinate wilfulness and presumptuousness (1 Sam. xi. 5, 7, 13, xiii. 8, 9, 11, xiv. 44, xv. 9, 24). For this reason both reached the latter period of their life with the painful and anxious consciousness that they were clearly rejected of God (Judg. xvi. 17; 1 Sam. xvi. 14, xviii. 10, and others); both ended their lives tragically by suicide (Judg. xvi. 28, 30; 1 Sam. xxxi. 4-6). In the same manner as the strange (and in itself guilty) passion of Samson for the daughters (women) of the Philistines led, by the Lord's Providence, to the means of punishing the Philistines for their dominion over the Israelites, so in the present case did Balaam's cupidity and ambition serve as a cause for his using his wonderful magic gift of foresight to bless the future spiritual descendants of Israel; while, by means of his prophetic ability (but not vocation), he glorified the Name of the Almighty before the face of the nations.

## CONCLUSION

### THE MORAL SIGNIFICATION OF BALAAM'S HISTORY

THE preceding chapters constitute a definition of the historical conditions leading to the collision of the Mesopotamian magian Balaam with the Israelites, and give us a sketch of his life and character. But every historical event, every connection or collision of one person with another constituting a part of the history of mankind, proceeds from the intervention of a Divine Providence, by means of which the Creator 'preserves the existence and the strength of the beings created by Him, guides them to a happy end, contributes to the general welfare, averts the evils brought about by estrangement from virtue or corrects these evils and turns them to good results' (*Amplified Catechism of the Orthodox Eastern Church*, p. 29). This is why the history of Balaam's connection with the Israelites must absolutely express a definite moral idea, independently of the personal consciousness of the personages taking part in those events. The substance of this idea is equally important to Balaam personally, and to the Israelites in their relations to other nations. As regards Balaam, it has been sufficiently explained in the preceding chapters that his call to curse Israel was ordained by the Lord Himself to test the sincerity and the purity of his faith in the God of holiness and righteousness. The signification of this event for the Israelites is established by the sacred historian Moses himself and his disciple Joshua. According to the testimony of Joshua, the transformation of Balaam's curse into a blessing to Israel constitutes one of the many righteous manifestations

(Micah vi. 5) of the Lord's favour to the Israelites, for by this means the Lord delivered *'them out of his hand'* (Balaam's) (Josh. xxiv. 9, 10). Moses says that by warding off the misfortunes which might have been called forth by Balaam's curse the Lord showed His peculiar love to His chosen people (Deut. xxiii. 5), and that this should serve as sufficient inducement not to be enticed by idolatry, but to cleave to the Lord. The transformation of Balaam's intended curse into a blessing to Israel was a new cause for increasing the fear of the Midianites, Moabites, and other neighbouring nations, and therefore of arresting their attacks on the Israelites as they advanced farther towards the promised land. The miracles by which Jehovah had already shown Himself the mighty Judge of the heathen gods had already inspired the Moabites, Midianites, and other nations of Canaan with the conviction of the invincible power of the God of Israel; therefore, when the Israelites advanced and approached the frontiers of the lands of Moab and Midian, these nations, not daring to attack them with sword in hand, sent for the soothsayer in the hope of weakening their power by his magic exorcisms. If Jehovah had permitted Balaam to curse the Israelites, these nations would have easily believed that the God of Abraham was weaker than their native gods, and they would not have hesitated to attack the Israelites with the assurance of success. It was therefore most important that Jehovah should maintain His glory before the face of the nations of Palestine; for this reason He forcibly compelled the most powerful representative of their honoured magians—Balaam—contrary to the hopes of the Moabites, and in spite of his sympathy for their cause, to bless the sons of Jacob, thus giving a fresh testimony of the invincible power of the God of Jacob and of His special favour to the *'people come out of Egypt.'* When, later on, Balaam, devoured by cupidity and hatred for the Israelites, gave the magical advice (Num. xxxi. 16) to entice the Israelites to bow down before Baal-peor and take part

in this iniquitous worship, God's terrible justice triumphed in the persons of Moses and Phinehas over this new snare, and punished Balaam and his accomplices with death (Num. xxv. 4, 7, 8, xxxi. 7, 8) in order that the Lord's word should be fulfilled that '*Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the firstfruits of His increase; all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them*' (Jer. ii. 3). This was sufficient to make the Moabites and inhabitants of Canaan understand that there existed no magic force powerful enough to injure Israel, and that every evil directed against him was miraculously converted into a blessing.<sup>1</sup>

In conclusion, it should be said that the connection and collision of Balaam with the Israelites are not only important for ages long past and men long since dead, but also for our times. '*Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come*' (1 Cor. x. 11). Then, as now, the kingdom of this world rises against the Holy Church and its 'prophets' in the persons of unbelieving poets and philosophers. In the name of the problem of the advance of civilisation, in profound works by which the world is captivated, in romances, dramas, and philosophical treatises, they strive to show in a magically seductive form the (imaginary) superiority of the glory of this world over the glory of God's eternal sovereignty. But we need not therefore be intimidated or cast into despair, for the Apostle Peter long ago said: '*There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their*

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<sup>1</sup> See De Geer, *Dissert. de Bil.* pp. 184-187.



*damnation slumbereth not. For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. . . . The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished; but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption' (2 Pet. ii. 1-7, 9-12).*

## APPENDIX

### REFLECTIONS OF PROTESTANT RATIONALISTS UPON THE AUTHENTICITY AND SIGNIFICATION OF CHAPTERS XXII.-XXIV. OF THE BOOK OF NUMBERS.

§ 1. FOR a long time already (since the eighteenth century) the conviction has been daily gaining ground in Western Protestant literature that the first five books of the Bible attributed to Moses in reality represent not five, or even ten, but a number of different separate narratives, speeches, and hymns, the contents of which are partly historical, half mythical and poetical. It has been affirmed that these productions do not belong to the pen of Moses, and became known later than the fifteenth century, namely, approximatively in the ninth and eighth centuries B.C. As to the fragment which we have commented upon in the preceding chapters (Num. xxii.-xxiv.), the opinion has also been established that it forms an entirely separate narrative, which by its signification has no connection either with the preceding or the following chapters of the Book of Numbers. By its context, style, and general colouring it is considered to entirely differ from the other chapters of the same book, and is supposed to have appeared much later than the period of the Exodus.<sup>1</sup>

Our theological literature, for reasons which it is superfluous to mention here, follows the example of the biblicists of the Western Churches, who when they undertake the commentary of a book, or a part of it, offer proofs of its authenticity and explain its sense at the same time.

Following this custom, we have therefore before us the unpleasing and almost useless task of proving the authenticity of chapters xxii.-xxiv. of the Book of Numbers, and of showing

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<sup>1</sup> A general sketch of the history of the attacks against the authenticity of the Pentateuch may be found in Arno, *Defence of the Pentateuch of Moses*, translated into Russian by the Archpriest Vladimirsky, pp. 43-61.

the falsity of the signification given to the narrative by the Western school of critics.

There are different manners of proving the authenticity of these chapters. If we follow the usual Biblical Isagogical method of proving the authenticity of the Sacred Books, both that of chapters xxii.-xxiv. of the Book of Numbers as well as of every other sacred book, we must proceed as follows:—

Amongst the arguments advanced to prove that chapters xxii.-xxiv. of the Book of Numbers differ from the other parts of the Pentateuch, the peculiarity of a great many expressions which are not to be found in the other books of Moses are generally referred to, also the unjustifiable use of the names of God, 'Jehovah' and 'Elohim,' one for the other, as in Genesis; the peculiarities of form, namely, the prevalence of poetical character not only of the prophecies, but of the historical text, which distinguishes this from the other narratives of the Pentateuch.<sup>1</sup>

It is customary to refute similar arguments with the same weapons. The numerous expressions which are not to be found in other parts of the Pentateuch might be regarded as a proof of unauthenticity if the hypothesis that the whole Pentateuch is nothing but a collection of fragments is recognised, but this hypothesis remains unproved. During centuries of learned investigations those who reject the authenticity of the Pentateuch have not been able to prove the exact quantity of the supposed parts constituting it, nor its volume, that is to say, the number of chapters and verses, nor could the time and place of their origin be proved.<sup>2</sup>

As to the connection of chapters xxii.-xxiv. with the preceding chapters, it is confirmed by the context which coincides with the preceding chapter (xxi.), which describes the victories of the Israelites and the terror they inspired in the Moabites. If the contents of chapter xxv. are compared with chapter xxxi. 16 of the Book of Numbers, where the idolatry of the Israelites is attributed to Balaam's instigation, this fact must be considered as the result of Balaam's counsels to the Moabites and Midianites after he was prevented by God from fulfilling his first intention of cursing the Israelites.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> De Wette, *Kritik der Israelitischen Geschichte*, pp. 362-369.

<sup>2</sup> Arno, pp. 110-112.

<sup>3</sup> De Geer, *Bil.* p. 151.

The evident variance between the partial indications of chapter xxv. 2 and chapter xxxi. 16 as to who played the principal part in the perversion of the Israelites to the idolatrous worship of Baal-peor can be easily reconciled by the fact of the alliance existing between both nations and their alternate share in seeking means to enfeeble the Israelites. As the coarser-minded Moabites were the principal factors in the invitation to Balaam, so under the influence of the crafty Midianites they were the first instigators of the perversion of the Israelites.<sup>1</sup> If even we agree with the rationalists, that the use of God's names 'Jehovah' and 'Elohim' does not present sufficient foundation in the work commented, this very argument reveals the error of the hypothesis, according to which the German commentators take the different manner of using the words 'Jehovah' and 'Elohim' as a foundation for dividing the Pentateuch into several distinct works, written by imaginary editors of the Elohist (historical part) and Jehovist (prophetic and instructive). On the other hand, it is evident by the passage quoted of the Book of Numbers that the same author may have used both names, and have used the name of Jehovah in speaking of God Who reveals Himself, whilst the name of Elohim is used when God is mentioned, independently of His manifestations, as a reasonable sovereign Power.<sup>2</sup> But this is not sufficient. The rationalists, wishing to prove the correctness of the theory of the fragmentary character of the Pentateuch, and the doubtfulness of chapters xxii.-xxiv. of Numbers, point to the contradictions in these chapters, such as that contained in chapters xxii.-xxiv. and in chapter xxxi. 16. 'If, according to the testimony of this part of the narrative, Balaam gave the enemies of Israel a counsel so destructive for the latter, how could he have been so favourably inclined towards them in his prophecies?'<sup>3</sup> In consequence of this, chapter xxxi. 16 is in contradiction with chapters xxii.-xxiv., which give a quite different narrative, and it is incomprehensible how this episode could have been transmitted in this form if the author intended to say the same as in chapter xxxi. 16 and Deut. xxiii. 5, 6;

<sup>1</sup> De Geer, *Bi.* p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> This explanation is more plausible than the one given by Hengstenberg in his *Autentie des Pentateuchs*, i. p. 408.

<sup>3</sup> *Kritik der Israel. Gesch.* p. 365.

whilst in chapter xxv. nothing is said of the particular means by which this event came to pass in accordance with chapter xxxi. 16.<sup>1</sup> This objection is founded on inattention to the suggestions contained in chapters xxii.-xxiv., and on an evident unwillingness to take into account the peculiar characteristics of Balaam's personality.

It is clearly evident that the connecting point of the narrative consists in the invitation to Balaam; that the conduct and position of Balaam mentioned in chapter xxxi.<sup>1</sup> 8, 16, does not present anything unexpected or psychologically impossible for any one acquainted with his moral disposition as depicted in chapters xxii.-xxiv. In fact, if Balaam was so blinded by the promises of the king of Moab that he asked the Lord's permission to curse Israel, and hoped that his prayer would be fulfilled (Num. xxii. 19) notwithstanding the preceding revelation, in which God had already directly told him that this people was blessed (Num. xxii. 9, 12); further, if he did not take as a prohibition the conditional permission (xxii. 20) to go to the king of Moab; if the terrible apparition of the angel of Jehovah was necessary to restrain him from cursing Israel; if, finally, his soul, darkened by the passion of cupidity and ambition, was a long time before it realised the vision, notwithstanding its powerful effects, it is quite natural that when the impression of the Divine warnings became weakened in his soul, and Balaam returned to his previous frame of mind, that is to say, when he was removed from the direct influence of the Divine power, then he again became the prey of his evil passions, and sought to satisfy them when possible. The fact that Balaam pronounced a blessing, and not a curse (as De Wette supposes), on Israel, is confirmed by the testimony of Deuteronomy (xxiii. 5, 6), in which it said that the Lord God would not hearken to Balaam, *'and turned the curse into a blessing'*; and by that of the prophet Micah (vi. 5), where the blessing pronounced by Balaam is counted as the sole work of God's Providence. The evil inclinations of Balaam and his hatred to Israel had already existed during the whole course of events we have described, but their disclosure was restrained by the Divine Power. When he was free to indulge these evil inclinations they determined his latter conduct and moral

<sup>1</sup> This objection was made by Vater; see De Geer, *Bil.* pp. 143, 144.

condition, so that Balaam was overtaken by a righteous retribution. There can also be no question of contradiction between chapters xxii.-xxiv. and xxxi. 8, 16, as the latter evidently presupposes the narrative contained in the former, and is so brief and abrupt that it would be quite incomprehensible to a reader unacquainted with chapters xxii.-xxiv.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, if anyone would wish from this to draw the conclusion that these chapters were written by different authors, it would be equally absurd if events, described in consequent order by Livy or Tacitus, were suddenly attributed to different authors or traditions. As to there being no indication of the fact that the Israelites were enticed to the idolatrous worship of Baal-peor by the indirect influence of Balaam in Numbers xxv., as is actually said in xxxi. 16, this cannot excite the doubts of any conscientious reader and make him conclude that the authors of the two passages were different. In the first passage Moses records the events which took place at the feast to which the Israelites had been bidden by their enemies the Midianites, but is silent in regard to the author of the deed. It is evident that when Moses described this feast he did not then know that Balaam had been its instigator and counsellor. In chapter xxxi. he returns to those events, and mentions them after the Midianites had received the just retribution for their depravation of the Israelites; and by that time he might have learned, possibly from the Midianites themselves, that Balaam had been the cause of the sad events of chapter xxv.<sup>2</sup>

De Wette further indicates that the narrative itself of chapters xxii.-xxiv. differs completely in style from other passages of the Pentateuch: 'The language is quite poetical, even in the historical parts, and has a rhythmical tendency which renders the difference from the preceding passages perceptible to the reader.' But the difference of style, as far as it exists, is easily explained by the difference of the subject of the narrative. 'Is it not natural,' says the historian Ranke, 'that the words of such a man should be as remarkable as his whole apparition? The entire narrative is distinguished by its elevation and sublimity, but is not the subject itself elevated? And has the critic the right to exact that great and small matters should be treated

<sup>1</sup> Hengstenberg, *Bil.* pp. 266, 267.

<sup>2</sup> De Geer, *Bil.* pp. 146, 147.

in the same tone? . . . What does this narrative set forth? It sets forth the circumstances which precede the sayings of Balaam—the stranger prophet in whom Jehovah and Israel are exalted. Such had never been before known, and this fully justifies the tone in which the account of the events is given. We meet with the same style in other parts of the Pentateuch: for instance, in chapter xix. of Exodus, in the introduction to the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, and in chapters xxxiii. and xxxiv. of the same book, where Moses implores the Lord to pardon the transgression of the people.<sup>1</sup>

But once a doubt was expressed as to chapters xxii.-xxiv. of Numbers dating from the time of Moses, it is natural to put the question, At what period were they then written? The answer required a careful investigation of some inward indications, which the critics are supposed to have found in the chapters under comment, and particularly in xxiv. 7, 17, 18, 22. According to their opinion, xxiv. 7 contains not only the indication of a king reigning in Israel at the time when the narrative was written, but the critics seem even to hear the echo of the victory gained by Saul over the Amalekites and their king Agag (1 Sam. xv. 7, 8), while the prophecy of the defeat of the Moabites and Idumæans is supposed to suggest the reign of David who conquered the Edomites.<sup>2</sup> We cannot, however, agree with this interpretation of verse 7, nor see in it the indication of a *vaticinium post eventum*, even if Balaam had spoken thus in virtue of his natural sagacity. Even in the time of Moses there was already a natural foundation for the supposition and expectation that royalty would be established. This foundation lay first of all in the people themselves. It is evident from Deut. xvii. how greatly the people of Israel desired to have a king, how they aspired to establish the royal power amongst them. It could not be otherwise: the Israelites were surrounded on all sides by nations governed by kings. It was to be anticipated that the monarchic principle would some day get the upper hand, particularly in view of the defects of the existing government. These considerations may have also proceeded from the

<sup>1</sup> Ranke, *Untersuchungen über d. Pentateuch*, pp. 236, 237.

<sup>2</sup> This objection is expressed in the above-mentioned work of De Wette, p. 367.

notion of God as the Supreme Sovereign of the Hebrew nation. Every ordinary Israelite who acknowledged the defects of the existing government may have been inclined to suppose that the evil proceeded from the disaccordance between the Invisible King and the visible political organisation; that the Invisible King ought to have one visible representative; and that, on account of the sinful weakness of the people, the Heavenly Sovereign could not satisfy this want. In view of these facts, the expectation of royalty amongst the Hebrews was a simple result of their faith in the royal importance of Israel.<sup>1</sup> In general, such an opinion of the importance of royal power cannot be considered as exclusively belonging to the prophecies of Balaam. The Pentateuch considers the establishment of the royal power as a principle immutably fixed in the conception of the nation. The royal power constitutes the foundation of the promises given to the patriarchs (Gen. xvii. 6, 16, xxxv. 11, xlix. 10). The prophecies of Balaam do not go further than a general glance, and there are no superfluous lines either in chapter xxiv. 7, or in vers. 17 and 18. The indications which the critics put forward as specially referring to the times of Saul and David have no other signification but that Balaam's prophecies seem to have been particularly fulfilled in the histories of these kings. If we look into the question more closely, it is evident that Balaam's sentences do not contain more than the expression of the idea of the Lord's special protection of Israel in the historical circumstances already existing in the time of Moses. We have already noticed that the nations to whom destruction was prophesied at the hands of Israel were already the foes of the Hebrew nation in the time of Moses; neither can the idea of Israel's supremacy in the time of Moses be denied as long as the Pentateuch is still recognised as a historical monument. This idea predominates in the history of the patriarchs. The author of the Pentateuch himself indicates it by referring the prophecies of Balaam (xxiii. 24, xxiv. 9, 17) to Gen. xlix. 10 as to their foundation. The Pentateuch relates in detail the realisation of this idea in the victory over Egypt, the Amalekites, and the Canaanites.<sup>2</sup> If, nevertheless, this passage is still considered as a false prophecy, namely, a prophecy

<sup>1</sup> Hengstenberg, *Authentic des Pentateuchs*, ii. pp. 204, 205.

<sup>2</sup> Hengstenberg, *Bil.* pp. 269, 270.



of events that have already taken place, this opinion can only be explained by the point of view of many modern German theologians, who maintain that the Holy Scriptures do not contain one single Divine prophecy in the true sense; and that, consequently, the predictions of events which have occurred at not very distant periods are nothing but the probable conjectures of a sagacious mind, while the prophecies concerning more distant periods and pointing to well-known events are undoubted falsifications, inserted after the facts had taken place. This is not the place to refute these errors, nor is there any necessity for such a refutation in the present case; it is sufficient to observe that the absurdity of this point of view is evident. Falsifications are admissible with a certain aim—to forward some tendency or defend some opinion. Meanwhile the Hebrew nation was pre-eminently a practical one; its religion was always considered true as far as its results were definite both in the present or in the future. What would have been the consequences of falsified prophecies composed after the events themselves had taken place? Finally, if the author or poet found it in accordance with the laws of poetical conception to name King Agag, why did he not directly mention Saul and David? Why should not the most powerful antagonists of Saul and David, the Philistines, and the kings of the Sabæans have found a place in this poem?

In spite of this, the representatives of the critical school (such as Vater, De Wette) have come to the following conclusion as to the authenticity of Numbers xxii.-xxiv.; they suppose that this episode is founded on an obscure ancient tradition, of the Moabites having called upon a soothsayer to curse the Israelites; they also think that a Midianite sorcerer wished to curse God's people, but failed in the attempt. National fancy has invested this historical germ in brilliant colouring, and thus a beautiful little poem bearing a prophetic and historical character sprung from these legends under the pen of a clever poet, with the view of the glorification of Israel. In other words, it is a poetical myth!

This point of view harmonised with the vacillating frame of mind of some of the Protestant communities; and, with a few modifications, was accepted by several eminent exegetists, such as Bleek, Knobel, Hartmann, Ewald, Oort, and many others. However, after a careful investigation of the above cited various

objections and arguments (without mentioning those which are too frivolous to be discussed), many of the more talented exegetists, such as Professor Ewald, the pillar of Biblical rationalism, came to the conclusion, though silently, that their objections were not sufficiently founded, that they only deny the tradition, without giving solid historical proofs of the circumstances under which the narrative contained in Num. xxii.-xxiv. was inserted. In order to maintain the bold hypothesis that the chapters commented form a historico-prophetical poem of mythical character, it would have been indispensable, first of all, to show the proofs by which this poem might have been represented as the product of a certain period in the history of the Hebrew nation. The supposition that these chapters were written after the reign of King Saul does not explain all the historical and moral circumstances of the case; for example, the reason why the Assyrians should be mentioned in chapter xxiv. 22 is insufficiently justified. Therefore, to acquire the right of calling Balaam's prophecies false (*vaticinia post eventum*), it would be absolutely necessary to prove that these doubtful chapters were written in the eighth century B.C., when Assyria began to lay its powerful hand on the nations of Palestine. Professor Ewald, in his *Jahrbücher der biblischen Wissenschaft* (viii. pp. 1-41), takes as the point of departure of his investigations the indication given in Num. xxiv. 22 of the warlike tendencies of Assyria against Palestine. He tries to prove by every possible sophism and far-fetched argument that those chapters of the Book of Numbers form not a history, but a poem; that the prophecies are not Balaam's, but those of the poet concealed beneath his name, and that the production dates from the period of the Assyrian domination. Ewald proceeds very skilfully. He does not enter into polemics with any one, but simply states his point of view very delicately, with the apparently strong desire of proving the deep signification and the importance of this passage, so that at first sight it is difficult to detect the falsehood.

The substance of Ewald's hypothesis, referring to the above-named passage of Numbers (xxii.-xxiv), can be exposed as follows. According to his opinion, this part belongs to a 'fifth narrator' (*Book of Origins*). By its form and contents it constitutes a complete work, and as a literary production reaches the highest degree of perfection. The difficult political

circumstances under which the people of Israel laboured in the eighth century B.C. were the causes of the appearance of this work. Its aim was to demonstrate the idea of Israel's eternity by reason of his spiritual nature (substance), notwithstanding the contact with the heathen world; to prove that the oppression of the heathens could not be fatal to Israel, and that the oppressors, Assyrians and Babylonians, would sometime be vanquished in the struggle. An ancient legend (saga) in which a heathen king invited the soothsayer Balaam to curse Israel was the canvas upon which this idea was developed. The poet describes the principles and actions of heathenism in a sketch of the characters of the king and the prophet, and the means employed against Israel by these representatives of the political and religious pagan world. The instability of these principles in relation to the principles by which Israel is guided and lives is represented by the conversion of the heathen prophet's curses into blessings. The force of the principles of the Hebrew nation is so great that the heathen prophet not only changes the curse into a blessing, but also foretells the eternal victory of Israel over his enemies and his eternal glory.

The argument which we have first of all to oppose to this explanation is that it would be far fetched and too general to take the idea of Israel's eternity as the fundamental idea of the narrative contained in Numbers xxii.-xxiv. Further, it would be an act of gross historical arbitrariness to think, together with Ewald, that these chapters form a poem and not a history, to take Balaam and Balak only as literary types, and not as living historical personages, and finally, to pronounce this a work written in the eighth century B.C. Ewald does not even give any proofs of this last statement; he only takes xxiv. 22 as the point of departure for his investigations, and strives to explain all the facts described in chapters xxii.-xxiv. by the events of that century. For instance, in order to explain the mention of Balaam, he says: 'As, at the time when this part was written, Assyria, with its ancient superstitions, prophets, and divinities, was extending its power more and more to the south and west, and Israel was feeling the oppression of the Assyrians more and more heavily, the author of the poem found it suitable to represent in the person of the ancient Balaam (whom the poet found

in the *Book of Origins*) a prophet come from the distant land of the Euphrates. Balaam is therefore the representative of a powerful and corrupt heathenism as far as its prophetic power extends; and the king, who invites him to come from the east to curse Israel, represents heathenism believing in the power of its prophets.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore evident that Ewald considers Balaam and Balak only as types in this passage of the Pentateuch. Also, according to his opinion, the Moabites are introduced into the narrative in accordance with the requirements of æsthetic rules.<sup>2</sup> This opinion, however, is undeniably erroneous in view of the testimonies given in Deut. xxiii. 4, 5; Micah vi. 5, in which not only the invitation to Balaam is represented as an historical fact, but the conversion of the curse into a blessing is recognised as an actual event. Ewald tries to give the same colouring to the other parts of Balaam's history; and in those passages where his hypothesis is contradicted by the exact indication of a locality, as, for instance, 'the Israelites pitched their camp in the plains of Moab,' he tries to obscure the matter by considerations, such as follow: 'This locality (the plains of Moab) may have served the author as a corroboration of his statement, because the power of Israel after David was brilliantly displayed by a second victory over the Moabites, and their subjection.'<sup>3</sup> Ewald explains the other special indications referring to the time of Moses, such as the camp life in the wilderness (Num. xxiii. 10, xxiv. 1, 5, 10), by the author's highly developed artistic capacity of representing the peculiarities of the higher life of Israel in the time of Moses.<sup>4</sup>

Such an explanation is refuted by the mention of the defeat of the Amorites (Num. xxii. 2) and of the then recent departure of the Israelites from Egypt, and their encampment near the borders of the land of Moab (xxii. 5). Ewald tries to prove the origin of the so-named 'poem' to the time of the Assyrian domination by the following arguments: 'As every Messianic hope is expressed more definitely in proportion to the political difficulties of a certain period, therefore it is undoubted that the eighth century appeared as such to our author, for the kingdom of Judah was then oppressed both by the lesser neighbouring

<sup>1</sup> Ewald, *Jahrbücher*, viii. p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Ewald, *Geschichte des Israelit. Volkes*, ii. p. 301.

<sup>4</sup> Ewald, *Jahrbücher*, viii. p. 7.

nations and distant powerful monarchies.’<sup>1</sup> It is true that the hope of God’s people of victory over their foes is here represented in especially salient features; but the principal enemies of the Israelites at that time were the Moabites, and not the Assyrians, because it is against Moab that are directed ‘*the Sceptre which shall rise out of Israel, and the Star that shall come out of Jacob*’ (Num. xxiv. 17). On the other hand, the mention of Asshur is very brief (Num. xxiv. 22), and the Moabites in the person of Balak are the principal personages of the narrative. Finally, that which is still more important is that Amalek is here represented as the most powerful nation (Num. xxiv. 20), and not Asshur, and the supreme power of the king of Israel is the victory over Gog, king of the northern people.

The shallowness of Ewald’s arguments is particularly evident when he tries to reconcile Num. xxiv. 20, 21, 24, with his point of view. ‘It is very obscure at first sight,’ says he, ‘in what manner Amalek (xxiv. 20) and the Kenites (ver. 21) enter into this history; for both the Amalekites and the Kenites disappear more and more from the pages of history after Solomon, and they appear here, however, when we expect references to the hopes and events of this period (eighth century) as sufficiently important to engross attention.’<sup>2</sup> Ewald explains this obscurity in the following manner. In the first place, taking as a foundation 1 Sam. xv. 6, ‘*And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them,*’ he places the Kenites in such close connection with the Amalekites, that if they are mentioned in the eighth century it would be a reason for naming the Kenites. This is the first argument. However, according to the testimonies of 1 Sam. xv. 6, xxvii. 10, xxx. 29, the Kenites, in opposition to the Amalekites, were in friendly relations with the Israelites. Besides this, the data that the Amalekites were at war with the Hebrews in the eighth century are very dubious. Ewald refers to the testimony of Josephus (*Antiq.* 9, 99, 1, 2), according to which the Amalekites were the allies of the Edomites in the war with the king of Israel, Amaziah (2 Kings xiv. 7). But this supposition is refuted by Num. xxiv. 20, where it is said that ‘*Amalek was the first of the*

<sup>1</sup> Ewald, *Jahrbücher*, viii. p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Ewald, *Geschichte des Israelit. Volkes*, ii. p. 161.

nations,' therefore the powerful ones are the Amalekites, and not the Edomites. Finally, it is said in 2 Kings xiv. 7, '*He [Amaziah] slew of Edom in the valley of salt ten thousand, and took Selah by war.*' The Amalekites are not mentioned at all, therefore this silence shows that the part they played was very insignificant, or it even entirely refutes Josephus's statement.

The indication given in Num. xxiv. 24 '*And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber,*' does not agree with the hypothesis of Ewald. He explains the events prophesied here as having occurred not long before chapters xxii.-xxiv. were written. The words 'ships shall come from the coast of Chittim' refer, according to him, to the attack of the fleet of the Cyprian pirates which invaded both the coasts of Canaan and Syria, therefore of the Hebrews and Assyrians. But as such an explanation, even independently of the mutilation of the text, appears improbable, Ewald brings forward another. 'As it is mentioned in the Tyrian chronicles of Menander,' says he, 'that the Tyrian king Eluleias vanquished the Chittites who had risen against him, and as this rebellion was sufficiently important for king Shalmaneser to take advantage of it in his war against Tyre, so it may be justly admitted that the revolt of the Chittites had lasted a long time before it was subdued by Eluleias.' Any one will see that this explanation has no connection whatever with the contents of Num. xxiv. 24, where it is said that Asshur and Eber will be conquered by a power coming from the coast of Chittim, while according to Ewald it would appear that the Chittites were conquered by the Tyrian king. There is another circumstance of which the rationalistic school has lost sight, and which is quite out of union with the historical condition of the Hebrews in the eighth century B.C., namely, the prophecies of Balaam, which, even according to the rationalists, form the nerve of the narrative, represent the political and economical position of the Israelites in a most flourishing condition, which could not have been the case in the eighth century, when, judging from the irrefutable testimony of the Bible, the kingdoms of Ephraim and Judah were in a lamentable condition.

Therefore, those critics who regarded the narrative of chapters xxii.-xxiv. of Numbers as a poetical representation of historical events, contemporary with the author, had to solve the problem

of connecting the narrative concerning Balaam with a period and reign which in its general features could completely coincide with the events recorded in these chapters. Besides this, the refutation of the Church's belief, that these chapters were written by Moses, must have appeared uncertain and not sufficiently circumstantial even to the representatives of the critical school themselves. These doubts gave rise to the necessity of submitting the question to a still more careful analysis and critical investigation. This appeared the more indispensable to the rationalists, as the hypothesis of De Wette, which had seemed for a time entirely satisfactory, was declared void of scientific credibility, first by Hengstenberg, and then by Tholuck and Kurtz. The Belgian scholar Oort took upon himself a full and circumstantial rationalistic explanation of chapters xxii.-xxiv. of the Book of Numbers; in 1860 he edited a work, *Disputatio de Pericope Num. xxii. 2-xxiv. Historiam Bileami continente*. This work is until now 'the last word' of the critical school concerning the episode of Balaam.

The numerous references to the works of the various Biblical commentators of these chapters, both of the orthodox and negative schools of Western Europe, lead to the conclusion that the author has examined the entire existing literature of the West concerning Balaam. Passing over in silence the orthodox arguments and explanations in favour of the authenticity of Balaam's history, and following the dogmatical method, he expounds the whole sum of arguments which have ever been set forth in Western literature against the authenticity of these chapters, and his own calculations, in order to prove the hypothesis of their having been written in the ninth century B.C. in the reign of Jeroboam. Therefore the negative side of his hypothesis stands and falls with the objections of Vater, De Wette, and Ewald which we have already examined; the positive side requires examination in the features which differ from the positive side of Ewald's hypothesis. But in the present case we will choose another means, and one more in accordance with the substance of the matter for estimating the credibility of the rationalistic hypotheses offered to our judgment by Oort.

The whole question of authenticity may be thus formulated. If chapters xxii.-xxiv. of Numbers do not belong to the pen of Moses, it may be supposed, by their inward indications, that

their origin springs either from the time of the first Israelite kings in the eleventh century, or that they were written in the eighth century at the time of the appearance in anterior Asia of the powerful Assyrian monarchy, or somewhat earlier, namely, in the ninth century.

The rationalists affirm that these chapters do not belong to the pen of Moses, in other words, that this narrative does not date from the fifteenth century B.C., but was written much later. But as science requires that an approximatively exact date should be given of the appearance of the narrative, the rationalists have referred it, as is evident from the preceding, to several periods, some to the eleventh, others to the eighth or ninth centuries B.C. Commentators search for proofs of these three hypotheses in the contents of chapters xxii.-xxiv., in other testimonies of the Holy Scriptures, and in several heathen monuments of antiquity. The defenders of the first hypothesis found their opinion on the indication of the existence of royalty and the mention of King Agag in xxiv. 7; on the defeat of the Moabites (ver. 17), of the Edomites (ver. 18), and the Amalekites (ver. 21). The basis of the second hypothesis is, first of all, the prophecy of Balaam, representing the flourishing state of the political and social condition of Israel, after that the indication of the existence of royalty in verse 7 (the mention of the different small nations, Moabites, Edomites, Kenites, Amalekites), the allusion to the terrible power of the Assyrians in ver. 22, and the abatement of their strength in Num. xxiv. 24. The third hypothesis is exclusively founded on the mention of the Assyrians. The rationalistic dogma, that the Holy Scriptures are productions of the human mind, and that their origin is purely historical, is the point of departure of all these hypotheses. The episode of Balaam is regarded as a historically prophetic poem, bearing the stamp of the historical conditions of the life of the Hebrew nation amongst whom the unknown author of this poem lived.

How far is the indication of the time correct according to the first hypothesis? Every good poem generally represents some great events of national life. The actors in the ancient poems of an historical or mythical character are generally called by names. Each person is absolutely individual, and not a collective type. The picture of the conditions in which certain events are developed



form an artistic representation of the reality. Such are the poems of Egypt, Assyro-Babylonia, Greece, and Rome. Such are the speeches and hymns of the prophets of Israel. From this point of view not one of the hypotheses can bear criticism.

According to the narrative of Numbers xxii.-xxiv., the Israelites are camped near the high places of Baal (xxii. 41); they are represented as a nomad and not a settled nation (xxii. 4-6; xxiii. 9, 13, 24); they abide in the wilderness according to their tribes (xxiii. 10, xxiv. 1, 2), near the top of Peor (xxiii. 28), near the river Jordan (xxii. 1), in their tents (xxiv. 5), are governed by their elders (xxiii. 21). According to xxii. 2, the Israelites had conquered the Amorites and appeared as an unknown people to the Moabites (xxii. 3, 4). In a moral sense they dwelt alone; their life seems unusual to the heathens (xxiii. 9); they are a nation of righteous men (vers. 10, 21). Nothing can be more prosperous than their political circumstances; they devour nations, as the ox licks up the grass of the field (xxii. 4); they are terrible to their foes, as a great lion (xxiii. 24); they eat up their enemies as a fierce lion, who breaks their bones, lies down and rests (xxiv. 8, 9); there is no iniquity amongst them, nor are there any calamities (xxiii. 21); their chief strength is the Lord God, Who dwells amongst them (xxiii. 21), and has, as it were, the strength of an unicorn (xxiii. 22, xxiv. 8). The kingdom of Israel is represented as one, whole and mighty. In spite of prophetic analogies, there is not the shade of a threat of approaching calamities notwithstanding the reserve of the author in relation to the Israelites. On the contrary, nothing similar is to be met with either in the Books of Samuel, or of the Kings or Chronicles, or in the Book of Ruth. According to the testimony of these books, the people of Israel lived in fixed dwellings principally to the west of the Jordan, in the lands from Dan to Beer-sheba (1 Sam. iii. 20; 2 Sam. xxiv. 15; 1 Kings iv. 25). Israel is governed by kings, and has fixed places of worship in Shiloh (1 Sam. i. 3), Gibeon (1 Kings iii. 4), and Jerusalem (2 Sam. vi. 12). The success of the Israelites in the wars led by their kings against the neighbouring nations is variable; they are divided by inward dissensions, struck by the plague. The Divine intercession and the direct saving deeds of the Lord seem as though screened by the purely human prowess

of kings Saul, David, and their captains, Abner, Joab, and Benaiah. Further, in all the ancient historical poems, in the hymns of Israel, such as the hymns of Deborah, the personages are all called by definite names, which is not the case in the so-called poem of Balaam. For it has already been proved in the note to xxiv. 7 that Agag is a mutilation of the word Gog, and the name of Gog, king of the northern nations, is the echo of another period and of other events. Finally, the subject of the poem is the transformation, by the power of the spirit of God, of Balaam's curse into a blessing. Such an event could appear important only in the fifteenth century B.C., when the art of magic was a great power both on the banks of the Nile and those of the Euphrates; at the time when God manifested His sovereignty over the nations by signs and miracles, that is to say, by executing judgment over the gods of other nations (Exod. xii. 12, xviii. 11). On the contrary, the whole life of the Hebrews during the reigns of their first kings was one series of inward struggles and wars with the neighbouring nations, so that the faith in the immediate domination of the Divine powers grew weaker, and the people found it necessary to inquire of the Lord (2 Sam. v. 23). During the reigns of Saul and David the Hebrews fought principally with the Philistines, Ammonites, Syrians, Edomites; in the Book of Numbers, on the contrary, the most powerful of the heathens are the Amalekites (Num. xxiv. 20); and all the rest of the nations here mentioned, except the Moabites, perish from the hands of other nations not yet named (but not of the Israelites). The enemies of Israel who are threatened with destruction in xxiv. 17, 21, are exclusively those who were hostile to the Israelites at the time of Balaam's apparition on the scene of history. The prophecy begins with the Moabites on the east, then follows the eastern part of the southern enemies, the Edomites, then the western, the Amalekites and the Kenites (xxiv. 21). All the nations here enumerated were hostile to the Israelites at that period. If the authenticity of Balaam's history is to be refuted, and the narrative is to be referred to a later period, it is impossible to explain why precisely these nations, and not any others, should have been named. The position of affairs (as we have seen above) was quite different at the time of Saul and David. The enemies with whom Saul had to contend are briefly enumerated in 1 Sam.

xiv. 47, 48: *'So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them. And he gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them.'* The brevity with which these nations are mentioned proves that at the time indicated they played no prominent political part, had no close relations with the Israelites, and were not considered particularly important by the contemporaries of Saul. On the contrary, the attention of the king and his subjects was occupied with the Philistines, who, since the end of the period of the Judges, had become more formidable to the Israelites than all other nations. The description of the battles of Saul with the Philistines fill two whole chapters of the First Book of Samuel (xiii. and xiv.). This war began with Saul's reign, and lasted to the end of his life, *'and there was a sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul'* (cf. xiv. 52). Saul perished in battle against the Philistines; they were also the first enemies with whom David had to contend (2 Sam. v. 17, 19).

Therefore, if the chapters under consideration had been written in the time of Saul, the gifted poet-author must have introduced the Philistines into his epic, and have animated Israel against them; but such is not the case. If it seems incomprehensible that in the time of Saul the principal foes of Israel named should be the Moabites, Edomites, Amalekites, and Kenites, and not the Philistines, it is still more incomprehensible at a later period, namely, in the time of David. The most dangerous wars of David were against the Syrian kingdoms, against whom hostilities had already broken out in the reign of Saul; and David's greatest victories were over the Syrians. The victory over Hadadezer, king of Zobah, one of their powerful sovereigns, is mentioned in 2 Sam. viii. 3, 4, and verses 5 and 6 transmit the defeat of the Syrians at Damascus, who came to succour the king of Zobah, so that the Syrians were completely subdued by David. In 2 Sam. x. 5-18 there are details of the brilliant victory gained over the allied Aramaic kings; in 2 Sam. xii. 26, and further, we read the narrative of the great defeat of the Ammonites, who had already become terrible to the Israelites at the end of the period of the

Judges, and had also warred with Saul. On the contrary, all the nations mentioned in Balaam's history played but a secondary part in the time of David, and their subjection is only mentioned in a few words; that of Moab in 2 Sam. viii. 2; Edom viii. 14, Amalek, quite incidentally, in verse 12; and the Kenites not at all. In Num. xxii.-xxiv., on the contrary, not one of the nations is mentioned against whom David was compelled by necessity to lead long and stubborn wars; and if we add that in the narrative of the Book of Numbers the Amalekites are represented as surrounded with a halo of power, of which there were no traces in the time of David, it will become evident to every impartial reader that this prediction cannot possibly be explained by the historical circumstances of David's reign, and that it must have sprung from the soil of a much earlier period. Strictly speaking, Balaam's prophecies do not correspond to any other international relations excepting those of Moses' time, when all the nations mentioned were already entering into hostile collision with Israel, and excepting them, no other.<sup>1</sup>

It is still more difficult to reconcile the mention of Gog as the most powerful king with the historical events of the period of the first kings of Israel. This name is used also in the sense of a personified, universal, political power by the prophet Ezekiel, known for his prophecies amongst the captive Hebrews, who inhabited the native land of Balaam—Mesopotamia (Ezek. i. 1, 3). The land of Magog, where lived Gog on the borders of the north (Gen. x. 2; Ezek. xxxviii. 2), was not distant from Mesopotamia; Gog was the chief prince of the nations of Rosh, Meshech, Tubal, Togarmah, and many others (Ezek. xxxviii. 2, 3, 6; cf. Gen. x. 2-4). This name is not mentioned openly in other passages of the Old Testament, but the existence of a coalition of northern nations threatening the south is suggested already in chapter xiv. of Genesis. Amongst the kings of North Mesopotamia who made an incursion into Palestine, we see the name of תִּדְלָל, Tidal, or Θαρραλ, king of nations, גִּיִּים. The word גִּיִּים, from גִּי, signifies in general a horde, a crowd of savage people, inclined to pillage (Deut. xxviii. 49-52). According to the opinion of Symmachus, the Scythians are principally understood under the word גִּיִּים

<sup>1</sup> See Hengstenberg, *Bil.* pp. 257-259.

(Fürst, *Handw.* under the word גוֹיִם). This is suggested by the geographical definition 'from the end of the earth' (Deut. xxviii. 49). In the Book of Ezekiel (xxxviii. 15) there is a slight variation in the expression; it is more explicit, 'out of the north parts.' As the land of Magog מַגּוּג signifies, according to the general opinion of all commentators both ancient and modern (see Fürst under the word מַגּוּג), the land of the Scythians, Sarmatians, and Slavonians; and as, on the other hand, Gog, according to the testimony of the prophet Ezekiel, means a chief (Septuag. ἄρχων) of many nations (גוֹיִם, see Ezek. xxxviii. 6, 9, 15), it is evident that the Tidal, king of nations, mentioned in Gen. xiv. 1 is the ancient predecessor of Gog. During the dominion of the Hittites, the pages of history are full of the military exploits of these powerful tribes (Brugsch, *Egypt*, 431), and later, in the thirteenth century B.C., after the fall of the sovereignty of the Hittites, they repeated their plundering incursions into the southern countries, and even penetrated into Egypt in the reign of Rameses III., at the end of the thirteenth century B.C. (Brugsch, *Egypt*, 566-568). During the period of the Assyrian domination, from the twelfth to the seventh century, they again lost their prestige, and are mentioned in the prophecies of Ezekiel already, when the Empire of Assyria was nearing its fall. It is thus evident that the name of Gog could not have been used as the personification of political power either in the eleventh, or in the ninth, or even in the eighth centuries B.C. At that time the Egyptian Pharaohs or Sar (king) of Assyria might have been the embodiments of power.

Therefore there are not sufficient indications to show that chapters xxii.-xxiv. of Numbers represent a picture of the political condition of the Hebrews during the reigns of their two first kings.

The hypothesis which sees in the narrative concerning Balaam a reflection of the reign of Jeroboam II. in the ninth century appears equally uncertain.

Jeroboam II. reigned forty-one years, 'and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He spake by the

*hand of His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher. For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel. And the Lord said not that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash' (2 Kings. xiv. 24-27).*

The material prosperity of the kingdom of Israel rose to a high degree. 'Samaria grew rich by commerce and military plunder. Magnificent houses rose everywhere, and the interior walls were decorated, in imitation of Ahab's palace, with slabs of ivory brought from Africa by the Phœnicians. The rooms were filled with luxurious furniture, also ornamented with the same costly material. There were specially built cool houses for the hot weather, and warm ones for the winter. The slopes of the hills were covered with splendid vineyards. The fertile plains to the east and west of the Jordan were sown with various sorts of corn, and at the proper time sowers and reapers were to be seen everywhere. Wealthy persons of both sexes were resplendent with luxury, but at the same time the majority of the population was steeped in want and poverty; as the riches of the few became greater, the poverty of the masses increased. The greater part of the population no longer owned land, which in consequence of the violation of the laws of Moses had passed into the hands of the rich, and the lower classes were obliged to exist by hired labour, by cultivating the land of others, which lowered them to the level of slaves.

'This latter circumstance is in itself a proof that the outward successes of Jeroboam II. had no firm foundation either in religious or in moral respects; in general, he followed the direction which had been traced by the first king of the Israelite nation—his namesake, Jeroboam I.

'The worship of Jehovah was still maintained as the state religion, but under the heathen symbol of a sacred calf. There was a magnificent temple in Bethel, the religious capital of the kingdom, with a multitude of priests and gorgeous ceremonies. The attempt to purify the religion from the coarser heathen excrescences failed, and idolatry invaded the country from all sides. Even the worship of Baal, which had been so zealously extirpated by Jehu, reappeared in various towns. There were several pagan

temples in Samaria itself, and a pagan temple dedicated to Ashtaroath was re-erected in the capital. The women, following the example of the idolatrous nations, burned incense before the shameful symbols of the goddess and took part in licentious festivals; even private persons erected images of Baal made of silver and gold. The smoke of heathen sacrifices rose from the high places, and idolatrous ceremonies were performed in the sacred groves. The shamelessness of pagan worship once more polluted the promised land. Women and maidens forgot their honour, and became prostitutes around the temples.

All this was a proof that the power of evil had definitively taken up its abode in the kingdom of Israel, and that the brilliant reign of Jeroboam II. was but the last flash of light, more visionary than real, which preceded a complete collapse. And so it was after the death of the king.<sup>1</sup>

Has this historical picture any resemblance with that which is reflected in Numbers xxii.-xxiv.? But there are particularities which render the hypothesis still more difficult to accept.

Namely, at that period the descendants of Jacob no longer formed one nation, but were divided into two hostile kingdoms who lived both in political and religious strife. The struggles of the kings of Judah with the kings of Samaria were prejudicial to the economic and political condition of the Hebrews; whilst the religious schism destroyed the unity of the Church, gave the death-blow to its organism, and rendered it open to the corrupting influence of the dissolute Mesopotamian religions. The silence in which these events are passed over in the narrative of the Book of Numbers cannot be explained by the fanciful hypothesis of the unification of both kingdoms beneath the sceptre of Jereboam II. (as Oort supposes, pp. 83, 84), nor by references to the prophets who declared the future destinies of the Church of the Old Testament without regarding the division of the nation in two kingdoms. A union could not have seemed possible to the human mind even in the future; and if the supposed poet-author of Balaam's history had had in view such an issue, it would have been more natural to expect that instead of the often repeated words 'Jacob and Israel,' there would have crept in the expressions habitual to the

<sup>1</sup> Lapoukhine, A. P., *Bible History*, ii. pp. 512, 513.

prophets of that period 'Judah and Ephraim' (cf. Zech. ix. 10, 14), or 'Jerusalem and Samaria' (Isa. x. 10, 11), condemned by the words of the prophet to become the prey of the Assyrian king (Isa. x. 5-11). Neither, although in the prophecies after the division the names of the reigning dynasties are often met with, do we here find any mention of David or Jehu, from whom Jeroboam proceeded. On the other hand, neither in the chronicles of Jeroboam's reign, nor in the march of events of that period, are there sufficient data to judge of the relations between the Israelites and the Moabites, Edomites, Amalekites, Kenites, and Assyrians. The Moabites, who had become powerful under their King Mesha, were weakened and defeated a short time before the accession to the throne of Jeroboam by the united efforts of Jehoram, king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah (2 Kings iii. 6-27). From that time the Moabites were evidently '*in subjection to the Israelites*.'<sup>1</sup> The Edomites were also defeated at that time by King Amaziah (2 Kings xiv. 7, 10), but *they are not mentioned at all* in the chronicles of Jeroboam's reign, which is quite natural, as the predecessor of Jeroboam II., Jehoash, had defeated Amaziah, king of Judah, the conqueror of the Edomites (2 Kings xiv. 11-15). The Amalekites<sup>2</sup> also, who in antiquity had been so powerful and formidable, appear to have become weak and inert already in the time of Saul, and were incapable of resisting even the small forces of the king of Israel (1 Sam. xv. 5, 8); the last remnants of the nation were destroyed by the sons of Simeon in the reign of Hezekiah (1 Chron. iv. 43).

There was still less reason to mention the Kenites during the reign of Jeroboam. Their hostility dated from the remotest antiquity (Gen. xv. 19). In the time of Moses they were the allies of the Israelites (Num. x. 29-32); in the reign of Saul they were also in friendly relations (1 Sam. xv.) with Israel; and not only refused to support the Amalekites, but were evidently on David's side in his war with the Amalekites (1 Sam. xxx. 29), later they even formed a part of the kingdom of Judah. These quotations prove the inconsistency of the hypothesis which refers the episode of Balaam to the time of Jeroboam, and represents the nations mentioned by Balaam as types of the nations which

<sup>1</sup> Oort is also of this opinion (see *Disput. de Peric.* xxii. 2, xxiv. p. 89).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. same author, pp. 93, 94.



were then hostile to the kingdom of Israel, on the plea that this enmity increased with the weakening of the power of the kingdom of Israel after its separation from that of Judah.<sup>1</sup> Another still more absurd conjecture makes the unknown Hebrew poet play the part of a newspaper writer of the present day and write Numbers xxii.-xxiv. with the object of frightening the Moabites, Edomites, Amalekites, and Kenites by the prophecy of their destruction, and in the interest of the Hebrews stops them from rising against the latter, thus weakening their forces in the approaching struggle with the Assyrians.<sup>2</sup> The author loses sight of the fact that there were no printing machines in those days, no railways to send newspapers by, and that the above-named nations had even no need of learning to read the Hebrew language. If Balaam's history had really been the poetical reflection of Jeroboam's time, it would have ensued that the poet would have pronounced sentence on the Syrians, the Phœnicians, and Philistines, whom the prophets Amos (i. 8, 11) and Zechariah (ix.-xi.) mention as the enemies of Israel, and who were conquered by Jeroboam (2 Kings xiv. 28).

Finally, there was still not sufficient foundation to mention the Assyrians in the reign of Jeroboam. This formidable empire is mentioned as the terror of the nations of Palestine a few decades later, in the reign of Menahem, king of Juda (2 Kings xv. 19, 20), and about a century earlier in the time of Ahab. This circumstance takes away all value from the hypothesis which refers the episode of Balaam to the reign of Jeroboam. It gives us, on the contrary, foundation to suppose that the mention of Assyria as the scourge of the small nations hostile to Israel would have been more appropriate at a time when the Kenites were actually at enmity with Israel (and the Egyptians), that is, at the time of the departure from Egypt, when Assyria was known as a powerful and warlike nation, greedy for conquest, both by the inhabitants of Egypt (consequently the Israelites) and those of Aram (consequently by Balaam).

According to the testimony of Manetho, preserved in the literal extract of Josephus (in the work *Contra Apionem*, i. 14), the Assyrians were a powerful nation, and threatened Palestine and Egypt with their invasions already in the reign of the first

<sup>1</sup> Oort, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 103.

Pharaoh of the Hiksos dynasty, that is, about the eighteenth century B.C. In the chronicles of the military campaigns of the Pharaoh, Thothmes III., we frequently meet with the name of Assur as obliged to pay a tribute. (It is mentioned side by side with the land of Ruten-Syria, or the land of Hita.<sup>1</sup>) According to the testimony of the Assyrian inscriptions, Assyria was already a powerful kingdom in the eighteenth century B.C. One of the Assyrian kings of that century is named as follows in an inscription discovered by Layard:—'Ismidagan, sovereign of Nepura, head chief of Halanne, the luminary of Eridu, the reigning prince of Esek, the king of Nizin (?), the king of the Sumirs and Akkadians to the goddess Melita.'<sup>2</sup> After that comes a temporary period of decline until about the year 1460 B.C. The names of the kings of that epoch have not been preserved, possibly for the reason that in the middle of the sixteenth century Mesopotamia fell into the hands of the Canaanites or Arabs under the command of Nimrod (Chwolson, *Russkiy Vestnik*, May 1859, pp. 201-204). This testimony is fully supported by the Pentateuch. According to Gen. ii. 14, the river Tigris flows to the east of Assyria, which leads us to suppose that at the time when the Pentateuch was written the Assyrian empire already existed, and that its domains to the west were so extensive that the part situated to the east of the Tigris, and forming Assyria in the strict sense of the word, does not enter into consideration. In Gen. x. 11, 12, the following Assyrian towns are mentioned: Nineveh and the city Rehoboth, and Calah, and Resen, between Nineveh and Calah. We read in Gen. xiv. that already in the remotest antiquity the Mesopotamian kings Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, that is to say, properly speaking, king of Assyria (Astafiev, *Monuments of Ancient Babylonia and Assyria*, 69), Chedor-laomer, king of Elam, and Tidal, king of nations, attacked and sacked the land of Canaan (Gen. xiv. 1-11). In the time of the Judges, Palestine was attacked by Chushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia (Judg. iii. 8-10).

From these different testimonies, it becomes a certainty that Assyria was a powerful kingdom not only at the time of the Israelites' departure from Egypt, but even earlier, and that it had

<sup>1</sup> Brugsch, *Egypt*, pp. 132-134.

<sup>2</sup> Astafiev, *Antiquities of Babylonia and Assyria*, pp. 69, 70.

always a tendency to extend its conquests to the west. In consequence of this tendency, Assyria early became hostile to Egypt, ever the natural rival of the nations settled on the banks of the Euphrates, a fact to which Egyptian monuments bear direct testimony. Palestine and all its inhabitants, without excluding the Southern Kenites, played the same part in this struggle as that which fell to its share during the second flourishing epoch of the Assyrian monarchy, namely, 'it was the battlefield of the two powers who marched against each other with enormous armies from the banks of the Euphrates and Tigris and those of the Nile.'<sup>1</sup> It was therefore natural that Assyria should be a symbol of terror to the small perfidious races in the eyes of the contemporaries of Moses no less than in the eighth or ninth centuries. The prophecies of Balaam concerning the subjection of Assur and Eber by the warlike power of Gog, coming from the side of Chittim, are still more in contradiction with this hypothesis; for, as we have already explained, under the name of Chittim is understood the ancient powerful kingdom of Hita, Kidu, or Hittites (northern, from the point of view of the Moabites and Balaam), and under the name of Gog is meant the leader of the northern nations. These nations are not mentioned during the reign of Jeroboam; and in general their existence and the part they played in the life of the ancient Asiatic nations have only become clear during the sixties of the closing century, thanks to the researches of Assyriology and Egyptology. It is only now that it is permitted to suppose that Assyria in its development stood in a certain connection with the military forces of the northern and north-western nations—the Scythians, Persians, Medians, and others—and it is only in the time of Moses that the historical part played by these nations could have been reflected in the prophecies of Balaam. This argument is the more trustworthy, as the attacks of the Scythians against anterior Asia and Egypt took place, according to the Egyptian documents in the thirteenth century, and later on in the seventh.<sup>2</sup>

The connection itself of the destinies of these nations with Israel does not in the least correspond with the events which took

<sup>1</sup> Schlosser, *Universal History*, i. p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> See Lapoukhine, *Bible History*, ii. p. 615.

place in the time of Jeroboam and other kings; namely, the Moabites and the other nations do not perish by the hand of the Israelites, but by that of a mysterious descendant of Jacob 'that shall have dominion' over the course of international relations of the future (Num. xxiv. 19; cf. Isa. xiv. 30; Zech. ix. 9; Hos. i. 7). Finally, as regards the religious condition of the people in the ninth century B.C., it was far from such as could be described by the words, '*He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel. . . . There is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel*' (Num. xxiii. 21, 23); for the prophets Amos and Hosea represent the people of that period as so iniquitous, depraved, and luxurious, that it was no wonder if repentance and conversion were required if they desired to find mercy in the eyes of the Lord. Therefore the Lord '*will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel, and will break the bow of Israel*' (Hos. i. 4, 5), '*and will rise for the sins of the people against the house of Jeroboam with the sword*' (Amos vii. 9). Israel, the '*blessed*' people (Num. xxii. 12, xxiv. 9), '*became at that time hateful to the Lord*' (Amos ix. 8). '*He will send a fire upon Judah*' (Amos ii. 5), and '*will press Israel, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves*' (ver. 13). Therefore, the hypothesis which refers the origin of Num. xxii.-xxiv. to the eighth century B.C. is also entirely false, for the historical circumstances of the Israelites and of the above-mentioned nations remained the same, or even worse.

It is thus evident that if the tradition of referring the origin of Num. xxii.-xxiv. to the time of the Exodus is set aside, there remains no possibility of determining the date when this narrative was written.

§ 2. The result that ensues is quite different if it is once acknowledged that chaps. xxii.-xxiv. were written in the time of Moses, and represent the true picture of an episode of that period. The data which give foundation to this statement are numerous—(1) The names and technical expressions; (2) the peculiarity of the subject; (3) the historical references; (4) the context; (5) the testimonies of other books of the Bible or parallel passages. In fact, if attentively examined, it may be observed that these chapters contain words and expressions which have either an Egyptian or Assyrian origin, and are not to be met with in subsequent parts of the Bible. Thus the name of the

country on the eastern bank of the Jordan by Jericho (Num. xxii. 1) is transmitted by the words עֲרֵבוֹת מוֹאָב, *the plains of Moab*, and may be considered as most ancient. Except in the Pentateuch, it is only to be found in Josh. xiii. 21, and then with a reference to the narrative of the Pentateuch, where the conquest of this land from the Amorites is described (Num. xxi.). The disappearance of this name from the following books cannot be called accidental, and is therefore the more important in reference to the subject of our investigation. The use of this expression 'the plains of Moab' was quite natural in the time of Moses. This land had been taken by the Amorites from the Moabites (Num. xxi. 26) shortly before the arrival of the Israelites, so that the reminiscence of the former owners was still fresh. In course of time the fact of the land having once belonged to the Moabites was forgotten, and the name disappeared. . . . The name itself, עֲרֵבוֹת, in the literal translation of the Septuagint 'the wests,' from עֶרֶב, evening, shows that the author himself and the generation contemporary with him lived to the east of the localities analogous with עֲרֵבָה. It has already been explained that only the Israelites who had come from Egypt could have the representation of עֲרֵבָה in the sense of 'sandy west,' for Egypt is the only country which has a wilderness situated to the west—the present desert of Sahara. It is therefore undoubted that the word עֲרֵבוֹת, which seems difficult to interpret, bears in itself the stamp of the author having lived with the generation contemporary with him in the neighbourhood of the desert of Sahara. For the following generations, born later in the promised land (or wilderness of Sinai), who had never seen the desert of Sahara, the name עֲרֵבוֹת was turned from a common into a proper noun; it was not used any more to express the quality of the soil, and in the absence of reasons for mentioning the locality it was eventually completely dropped. The acquaintance of the author with the ancient Egypt of the seventeenth to the thirteenth century B.C. shows itself by his using the purely Egyptian words עֲמוֹ, Amu, and עֵיִן הָאָרֶץ, the eye (face) of the earth (Num. xxii. 5). Both these words prove that the author not only himself knew the technical signification of these words which became incomprehensible to the Israelites at a later period, but that this sense was also known to the person in whose mouth the sacred writer placed these words. The name

Amu, as has already been explained in the proper place, according to the Egyptian inscriptions, means not the common noun, 'his people,' but a proper noun designating the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, the countrymen of Balaam, Amu, or the Aramites (Deut. xxvi. 5). The expression עֵין הָאָרֶץ is met with only in Exod. x. 15, to show the expanse of land covered by the locusts, and is again a proof of the author's knowledge of the Egyptian language. 'In the Egyptian written memorials the eye serves as a hieroglyphic denomination of Egypt.'<sup>1</sup> From this it is quite comprehensible that the hieroglyph expressing the land of Egypt may have become in the Hebrew language, from frequent use, a word meaning in general land, country surveyed by the eye. The signification of the original naturally underwent a change with the alteration in the meaning of the symbol, and eye in Hebrew, עֵין, grew to mean only view, or surface surveyed by the eye, or, joined to אָרֶץ, face of the earth (Num. xxii. 5). This word soon became an archaism for subsequent generations, and was replaced by the word פָּנִים, face. A further indication of the time of Moses, and in particular of the recent movement of the people towards the promised land, is to be found in the expression שָׂרְהָ צִפִּים, '*field of sentinels on the top of Pisgah*' (Num. xxiii. 14). This general expression 'field of sentinels' could be the name of a locality only in the mouth of an Israelite of the time of the departure from Egypt, as, according to the testimony of Num. xxi. 20, the Israelites had an abode on 'the top of Pisgah.' This expression would appear too indefinite to any other generation; and no other writer but a contemporary of Moses, who had perhaps sometime appointed a post of sentinels at that place in sight of every one, could have used such an expression to designate the locality.

On the other hand, these chapters also contain words of purely Assyrian origin, which are later only met with in the works of writers acquainted with North Mesopotamia, or applied in another sense. Amongst these words are the words *unicorn*, רִאָם (Num. xxiii. 22, xxiv. 8), נִדְהַשׁ, *enchantment* (Num. xxiii. 23, xxiv. 1), בֹּקֶב, *star* (Num. xxiv. 17). The unicorn is first mentioned in the passage quoted, and afterwards in others, such as Deut. xxxiii. 17;

<sup>1</sup> See Millington, *Signs and Wonders*, p. 145; in Savitzky's *Exodus of the Israelites*, p. 156, note 1.

Isa. xxxiv. 7; Ps. xxii. 21; Job xxxix. 9. This animal, as has been said above, was only known to the inhabitants of Mesopotamia and Northern Syria. In latter years its existence on the upper banks of the Tigris and Euphrates has been confirmed by the cuneiform inscriptions.<sup>1</sup> The word נִחֵשׁ, to express *enchantments*, is used exclusively in this passage.<sup>2</sup> This sense was oftenest given to it by the Assyrians, to whom the serpent represented a prophetic animal above all others. The word כּוֹכַב, star, belongs to Assyria, because in the Akkadian and ancient Assyrian languages a star was regarded as the manifestation of the Deity, the revelation of its substance; more than that, the written sign which ideographically represented this nation had primitively the form of a star.<sup>3</sup> Finally, in the same verse, the word שֵׁת, Sheth, plainly certifies that the author lived not later than the fourteenth century B.C., when this name designated the god of war, evil, and every violence in the eyes of the Egyptians and Aramites. In the later parts of the Holy Scriptures, instead of this purely Egyptian denomination of the god of war and disturbance, we meet with the terms בַּעַל זַפּוֹן, Baal-Zephon or Baal-Sutech; further, the sense of this name, similarly to the names שֵׁרָה לַפִּיִּם עֶמּוּ, was completely lost, and has only been disclosed in the last score of years, owing to the studies of the Orientalists in the original Egyptian and Assyrian literature.<sup>4</sup> Another sign of the antiquity of chapters xxii.-xxiv. is the expression בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים, 'in the latter days' (Num. xxiv. 14; cf. Gen. xlix. 1), which is to be found in the ancient cuneiform Assyrian inscriptions.<sup>5</sup> The fact of this mixture of Egyptian and Assyrian expressions can only be explained by the conjecture that the author did not write the whole narrative upon his own authority, but took the principal substance from another source. It is evident that the typical expressions of the Mesopotamian soothsayer himself have been textually transmitted by the author, whose education had been Egyptian, and who decided either to leave them unaltered or to write them down in the form used in Egypt.

<sup>1</sup> See note to Num. xxiii. 22.

<sup>2</sup> The Western rationalists, such as Bauer, are also of the same opinion (*Gesch. der alttest. Weissagungen*, p. 332).

<sup>3</sup> Lenormant, *Magie*, pp. 112, 167, 326.

<sup>4</sup> See note to Num. xxiv. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Schrader, *Keilinschriften*, p. 153.

There is another category of indications testifying to the origin of the chapters under consideration in the period of Moses. This is the perfect coincidence of the narrative with the customs, manners, opinions, ceremonies, ancient national superstitions of that era, such as the magical practices of the soothsayers, the reverence with which they were regarded by the people of that period, the singular mixture of Israelitish and heathen religious notions in the actions and words of Balaam, the accuracy of the geographical indications in the historical part, and the characteristic difference between the predictions of Balaam and the predictions of the prophets.

Namely, the extraordinary episode of the speaking ass, chosen by God for the instruction of Balaam (Num. xxii. 22, 33). This occurrence depended partly from the Chaldean, or, more strictly speaking, Akkadian point of view, peculiar to Balaam as an ancient magian, concerning the means in which Divine revelation was manifested. This has already been commented upon in another part of the book;<sup>1</sup> and it has also been explained that the Chaldeans foretold the future, sought for the revelation of the Divine will, amongst other manifestations, in striking and exceptional movements and actions of the domestic animals. The ass belonged in particular to such prophetic animals, and in the present case was the only instrument that would be sufficiently intelligible to the soothsayer Balaam to be a medium of the manifestation of the Divine will. On the other hand, this belief is reflected in all Balaam's actions; he sought, as is said in xxiii. 3, and xxiv. 1, the revelation of God's will *in what he saw and heard*, that is to say, in the material manifestations of nature, according to the practice of the Chaldean soothsayers. (See explanation of xxiii. 5. and the character of Balaam.) These two circumstances, that is to say, the faith in Divine revelation, manifested in the peculiar movements of animals, and the prophetic signification of other natural phenomena (such as the particular colours of clouds), reappear as a fundamental motive in the means by which God revealed Himself to Balaam. This motive is so ancient, has such a purely Mesopotamian colouring, that its signification, and even existence, in the narrative only became noticeable, owing to the discoveries of the processes of

<sup>1</sup> See chapter iv., 'The Trial and the Warning.'



ancient Assyrian mantology (divination). There is no trace of such an idea in the works of the rabbi, and the sacred historian himself may have introduced this narrative without having a clear understanding of its signification. Further, traces of the ancient Chaldean magic art appear also in the consciousness of the necessity of *seeing* the Israelites at the time of the conjurations (Num. xxii. 41, xxiii. 13, 28, xxiv. 12), also in the building of seven altars.

The indications of the locality also show the perfect acquaintance of the writer with the movement of the Israelites from the wilderness of Sinai to the borders of the land of Canaan through the parts bordering on the land of Moab; such knowledge could have only belonged to one who had taken part in the march. The points chosen by Balaam for pronouncing the curse coincide wonderfully with the situation of the Israelite camp. 'Balak leads Balaam first of all to Bamoth-Baal, then to the top of Mount Pisgah, from whence Balaam already sees a considerable part of the camp of Israel pitched in the wilderness, and finally to Mount Peor which rises over the wilderness, that is to say, the plains of Moab. According to the indication given in Num. xxi. 19, 20, the sons of Israel came first to Bamoth, and then from Bamoth in the valley, that is, in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah which looketh toward the wilderness;' at last they came to the valley over against Beth-peor (Deut. iv. 46). There is nothing of an artificial tendency in these indications. On one hand they bear the stamp of historical truth, on the other an acquaintance with the land of Moab, which was only possible for Moses, and less than all to later writers, living in the time when the Israelites were settled in the land of Canaan.

The horizon which Balaam surveyed from each of these different points is in strict accordance with their situation and distance from the Israelite camp. From Bamoth, which is separated from the plains of Moab by a considerable distance and a chain of mountains, Balaam only sees the utmost part of the people (Num. xxii. 41), the fourth part of Israel (Num. xxiii. 10). It could not have been otherwise. From the second place, the top of Pisgah, which was much nearer, he did not see the whole of the camp, but a part of it in a wider sense. Mount Peor must have intercepted the sight of a considerable part of the camp. It

was only from the latter, which rises straight over the wilderness, that Balaam had a view of the whole camp and saw 'Israel abiding in his tents, according to their tribes' (Num. xxiv. 2). This exactly coincides with the opening of the parable pronounced at that place: '*How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob . . .*'<sup>1</sup>

Besides this, the character itself of Balaam's parables has a quite different tone from the prophecies of a later period. In the first place, in accordance with the ancient Akkadian and patriarchal point of view, Balaam's prophecies are called, from their form, *parables* (Num. xxiii. 7); from their contents, *blessings* (xxiii. 20); and, in relation to the future, *counsels* (Num. xxiv. 14, '*I will advertise thee*'). However prophecy is regarded from the point of view of psychology, form, and contents, one thing is certain: that not a single prophet after the time of the Judges ever called his consolatory prophecies blessings; on the contrary, this term belonged exclusively to the inspired predictions of the ancient patriarchs, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Further, if this production is regarded from a purely literary point of view, the beauty of form, the vivid imagery, the exact parallelism, the brevity and mobility of the expressions, the poetic opening and the dispassioned relation to the object of his contemplation (excepting xxiv. 23) show that in the present case we have to do with the divinely inspired predictions of an exceptionally gifted heathen poet-prophet. The mysterious poetical carmen (hymn) of the soothsayer is felt in his words, which express the impassible purely contemplative relation of the stranger to the subject. The soothsayer, carried away by his visions, a stranger to Israel, is indifferent to the impression his speech may produce on his auditors; he is indifferent to good and evil in these moments, and transmits only that which he sees. The words of the prophets have a different tone, not only when they concern the destinies of Israel, but those of the neighbouring hostile nations. There we see and feel that the fate of Israel is dear to the prophet's heart, and that the prediction of destruction to the conquerors and oppressors of God's people flows from a deeply afflicted heart. The tone of Balaam's prophecies is quite other; he is only touched by the fate of his countrymen, the inhabitants of Mesopotamia and Arabia, threatened by the con-

<sup>1</sup> See Hengstenberg, *Bil.* pp. 250, 251.

querors from the north (Num. xxiv. 23). Besides all the signs of authenticity already given, we may also find important testimonies for the solution of this question in the context and quotations of the holy writers of later times. In reality, the history of Balaam is not only closely united to and even dependent on the preceding events of the Pentateuch, but also with those subsequent, as it forms the cause and condition of certain special actions and relations of the epoch of Moses. Thus, the nearest context, namely, the contents of Num. xxi., transmits the conditions which called forth the relations between the Israelites and Moabites and Midianites. The halt on the plains of Moab (Num. xxii. 1), the terror of the Moabites at the sight of the approaching Israelites (vers. 2, 3), plainly indicate that which is related in chapter xxi.; if these events had not taken place, Balaam would not have been called by the Moabites. Finally, the events communicated in chapter xxv. with the reference of chapter xxxi. 6 are the consequences of the narrative contained in chapters xxii.-xxiv. If the Moabites had not followed the advice of the Midianites, and had not invited Balaam, if he had not failed in his intention of cursing the Israelites, if he had not been far away from his home, perhaps he would not have stopped at the Midianites', nor have given them the advice of seeking the friendship of the Israelites, and the melancholy catastrophe described in Num. xxv. 9, 18, might not have taken place, nor that sudden destruction of the Midianites narrated in chapter xxxi. Further, the advice of Balaam became the cause of a long estrangement and enmity between the Israelites and the Moabites, and their allies the Ammonites, whom it was forbidden to receive even to their tenth generation into the congregation of the Lord (Deut. xxiii. 3-5), because they had hired Balaam the son of Peor from Pethor in Mesopotamia in order to curse the Israelites.

Finally, the echo of these events has been preserved in works not belonging to the time of Moses. The prophet Micah, who lived in the eighth century B.C., refers to this episode in vi. 5 of his prophecies, '*O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him.*' In the chronicles of remote antiquity we find no mention of the passage concerning Balaam until the period of Judges and the time of Joshua. In the message of Jephthah to the king of the

Ammonites (Judges xi. 25) it is mentioned as a generally known fact that Balak, son of Zippor, king of Moab, did not fight against the Israelites, which agrees perfectly with what is said in Num. xxii. 4 and following. The most ancient testimony, and one which is nearly contemporary with the event itself, is contained in Josh. xxiv. 9, 10, where amongst various striking cases of Divine protection are described the preparations of the Moabite king to defend his country from the attacks of the Israelites, and the invitation to Balaam to curse the Israelites, and the change by God's will of the curse into a blessing, so that Israel was delivered out of the hands of Balaam. Therefore, testimonies of the historical authenticity of the narrative contained in Num. xxii.-xxiv. ascend to the very time when those events took place; and, joined to all that has been previously set forth, constitute sufficient foundation for the undoubted conviction that these chapters were not written later than during the time of Moses.

§ 3. There is, however, a fresh question which arises, How did Moses become cognisant of Balaam's actions, which had not taken place in his presence? This might have happened in several ways. (1) For one reason or another Balaam may have written down all that had taken place, for instance, for his own glorification, or he may have related them to one of the Israelites after the defeat of the Midianites before he was slain (Num. xxxi. 1-8). This writing or narrative may have circulated amongst the Midianites and Moabites, and have at last fallen into the hands of the author of the Pentateuch. (2) The narrative of Balaam may have become known to the Israelites through persons who were near to Balaam, his servants or his friends the Midianites, their wives and children. These events may have been communicated during the short period of friendship between Israel and the Moabites and Midianites (Num. xxv.), or after the defeat and captivity of the latter (Num. xxxi.).

The first supposition that the whole episode of his call and blessings is described by Balaam himself loses probability for the following reasons: (1) The different names of God could not possibly have been used by Balaam himself. This is a proof that the narrative was written not only by an Israelite in general, but, specifically by the author of the Pentateuch. This proof is already given by Hengstenberg in his *Beiträge*, ii. p. 404 *et seq.* (2) How

could Balaam have attained to writing Hebrew so well? (3) The fragment resembles the Pentateuch in all the characteristic expressions and construction of the sentences. The unusual expression עֵין הָאָרֶץ, 'eye of the earth,' instead of surface, used in Num. xxii. 5, 11, is to be met with in Exod. x. 5, 15. The expression הִנֵּשְׁקָה עַל-פְּנֵי הַיְּשִׁימֹן (Num. xxxiii. 28) agrees wonderfully with וְנִשְׁקָפָה עַל-פְּנֵי הַיְּשִׁימֹן (Num. xxi. 20). There is the same similarity between chapter xxii. 36, '*Unto a city of Moab, which is in the border of Arnon, which is in the utmost coast,*' and chapter xxi. 13, '*Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites.*' The expression רִנְלִים, in the sense of feast, is met with in Num. xxii. 28, also in Exod. xxiii. 14, and is never met with in other parts. The expression מְעוֹרֵךְ in Num. xxii. 30 has a parallel place only in הָהָם עַד-הַיּוֹם in Gen. xlviii. 15, except that מְעוֹרֵךְ is nowhere to be met with. The formula בְּעֶרְבוֹת יַרְדֵּן, or also מִעֵבֶר לַיַּרְדֵּן, in the Book of Numbers, is a characteristic peculiarity. This formula forms the beginning of the section and finishes it, thus forming a conclusion to the whole book in chapter xxxvi. 13. It is likewise to be met with constantly in the course of the book, where some separate fragment begins or finishes (see Hengstenberg, *Beiträge*, iii. pp. 400-405). The words, '*Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites,*' in the beginning of chapter xxii., seem to be a continuation of the narrative in chapter xxi. 21-35 of the war between the Israelites and the Amorites. Chapter xxv., where the perversion of the Israelites by the Moabites and Midianites is related, would have been incomprehensible without what is said in chapters xxii.-xxiv. of the fear of the Moabites and the Midianites of the people 'come out from Egypt,' and of their efforts to be delivered from them. The relation of the Moabites and Midianites to each other would be unintelligible if it were not for the fourth verse of chapter xxii., which informs us that the elders of Midian were called upon by the Moabites to take part in general measures against their common foes. The mention of Baal-peor in chapter xxv. 3 is explained by verse 28 of chapter xxiii., where Peor is mentioned as 'looking towards Jeshimon' (the wilderness), where the Israelites had pitched their camp.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hengstenberg, *Bil.* pp. 215-217.

Theologians therefore sought for another more probable method of explaining the origin of the narrative, namely, that of an oral tradition, which was afterwards written down by Moses himself. But who could have related all these events to Moses in such detail? Some think that nobody could have done so except Balaam himself. But how, upon what occasion, and where, could Balaam have met Moses? The following attempts have been made to elucidate the question.

It is said at the end of chapter xxiv. that 'Balaam returned to his place.' Therefore, taking into consideration the characteristics which have become known to us by the narrative contained in chapters xxii.-xxiv., let us see how he would have been most likely to act. 'His ambition and cupidity required satisfaction; this satisfaction had, by the action of God, been refused him on the part of the Moabites, therefore he must look for it from the Israelites, whose gratitude he considered he had the right of expecting. He immediately directed his steps to the Israelite camp, which was pitched at a short distance from the place where he had parted from Balak, but in all probability he did not there find the welcome he expected. Moses, divining his heart, which was not right in the eyes of the Lord, knew that gratitude did not belong to Balaam, who had done all he could in order to fulfil the wish of the Moabite king (cf. the expression, '*The Lord would not hearken unto Balaam*,' Deut. xxiii. 5), but to the Lord, therefore he received him coldly, and it was thus natural that the passion that possessed him should lead him to seek another way for its satisfaction; for Balak's words, "I will promote thee unto very great honour . . ." <sup>1</sup> (Num. xxii. 17) must have still rang in his memory. Hengstenberg thinks that it is doubtful that Balaam should have neglected such an apparently favourable opportunity of satisfying his craving for honours and riches; and 'the circumstance which particularly speaks in favour of this version,' continues the same theologian, 'is that the contents of chapters xxii.-xxiv. of the Book of Numbers could not have become known to the elders of Israel otherwise than by the personal communications of Balaam.'<sup>2</sup> But such a version does not at all agree with the words לָמָּוּתוֹ וַיָּשֶׁב, 'and returned to his place' (Num. xxiv. 25).

<sup>1</sup> Hengstenberg, *Bil.* p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

For if Balaam, after having parted from the king of Moab, had gone down from Mount Peor homewards, he certainly could not have gone to the plain of Moab, where the camp of Israel was pitched, for that would have been '*going forwards*' and not '*returning*.' The psychological explanation of Hengstenberg is also improbable: 'Balaam's attempt to approach the Israelites is hardly credible otherwise than if we suppose him morally transformed by the trials he had gone through; that they had softened his heart and inclined it to faith; but there are no signs of such a change. If his ambition and his cupidity had remained as strong as ever, or had even increased in consequence of his deluded hopes, then his disposition towards the Israelites, as the causes of his failure, must have been turned into hatred, and his intercourse with Jehovah been broken off for ever. In such a frame of mind he certainly could not think of acquaintance with the Israelites.'<sup>1</sup>

To admit of such a possibility would be to entirely lose sight of natural mutual human relations. Notwithstanding his cupidity, the Mesopotamian soothsayer would not have risked such an inconsiderate proceeding. Would such a clever and experienced man as Balaam, with his knowledge of human nature, have ventured to go to an entirely unknown people and require a reward for a service which must have appeared dubious in all respects? Not only Moses, but every sensible Israelite, might have taken the narrative of the stranger for a simple invention. Balaam's words could have only been believed by those who had implicit faith in his magic power; and such a confidence could only be gained after acquaintance with Balaam, or after some extraordinary manifestation of his magic power. Balaam knew better than any under what circumstances confidence had to be obtained. Finally, his arrival at the Israelite camp was psychologically impossible on account of the aversion which he felt for the 'people come out of Egypt,' and for many other purely personal considerations.

We are thus led to suppose that the sacred historian heard of all these events from somebody else, and under more natural circumstances. In the first place, it is certain that the Moabites and Midianites, who were interested in these events, thoroughly

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<sup>1</sup> Kurtz, *Gesch. d. alt. Bundes*, ii. 513.

knew all the details of the history. The invitation to Balaam and the journeys of the messengers took place under the eyes of both nations. The speech of the ass and the vision of the angel must have been related to Balak by Balaam in presence of all his princes (Num. xxii. 40) to justify the necessity of 'speaking only the words which the Lord said unto him.' The parables were also pronounced in the presence of all the elders (Num. xxiii. 6, 17); and as, added to this, both nations were deeply interested in the issue of this event, doubtlessly all the details were rapidly transmitted through the elders all over the country of Moab and Midian. Balaam was also accompanied by two servants, who were in constant attendance upon him, and were therefore the witnesses of all these events. Balaam may have spoken before them of the miraculous speech of the ass, and of the vision of the angel. They may have communicated these particulars to those who had heard the principal events from the elders, but, with natural curiosity, wished to know the circumstantial details. Besides this, Balaam himself must have spent at least a fortnight with the Midianites. Is it likely that he would have remained silent before the persistent questions of his hospitable hosts concerning an event of which they must have heard many rumours? Is it not probable that he repeated the whole history to them for his own self-justification, and even the blessings which he had been forced to pronounce upon Israel? His servants, who had also heard all these things with natural reverence, must have related them to others for the glorification of their master. Then, by the counsel of Balaam, the Moabites and the Midianites entered into friendly intercourse with the Israelites during his residence amongst the Midianites. Possibly he himself took part in the feasts and became acquainted with some of the young representatives of the Israelites. It may be, also, that the Moabites and the Midianites themselves related to the Israelites the events transmitted in Num. xxii-xxiv. The fact cannot be also denied that the Israelites may have heard of all this after the defeat of the Midianites (Num. xxxi.), for it is said in xxxi. 18 that the daughters of the Midianites remained in captivity in the camp of the Israelites. These maidens may have related later who Balaam was, and how he came to be amongst them, and what he had done. Finally, there is yet another source of information



which is probable. Nothing is said in the narrative of what became of Balaam's servants. It is quite possible that during the peaceful and apparently friendly intercourse of the Midianites with the Israelites those servants became known to the latter as the servants of the famous magian. They may have escaped the general slaughter, as having taken no part either in the destructive counsel or in the treacherous dealings of the Midianites, and have become the servants of one of the chief participators in the war of retribution. Thus the Israelites in general, and Moses in particular, may easily have become cognisant of all the details of the story from these inseparable companions of Balaam, who had been eye-witnesses of all the events that had taken place, and had heard his narrative of the same, and it may be supposed that all these communications were written down by the sacred historian. Finally, the close neighbourhood of the Moabites and Midianites to the camp of Israel, and the friendly intercourse which existed for some time between the nations, may have given many other occasions of acquainting Moses with this episode. Anyway, the history was generally known amongst the Israelites in the time of Moses—a fact which is certified beyond doubt by Deut. xxiii. 4, 5, and Num. xxxi. 16.

It is therefore necessary to admit that the source of Balaam's history was verbal tradition. But this assertion gives rise to the following questions: (1) Whence has proceeded the similarity of some of the sentences of Balaam's parables with the sentences met with in other parts of the Pentateuch? and was such an artistic and poetical exposition of the event, and particularly of the parables, possible in the age of Moses—the more so that this rare perfection of style has given to some reason to suspect the whole narrative of fictitiousness, and thus diminish its value as an instrument for the transmission of direct Divine revelation? These perplexities can be very satisfactorily explained by means of analogies taken from the most ancient literatures of Egypt and Assyria.

Ancient literature originated by means of two factors of vocal tradition—respect for antiquity, and the stability of the conditions of life and customs, whose modifications were slow and imperceptible. Therefore, with the prevalence of such principles, all the sentences of celebrated ancestors were transmitted unchanged

from generation to generation. The absence of books, the impossibility of satisfying the cravings of the mind with the means which are now at our command, were replaced by long and circumstantial narratives of eloquent men versed in the legends of the ancestral period. The simplicity of forms in the life of those days, the abundance of spare time, the sociability and freedom of intercourse,—all these were conditions which gave a wide scope to verbal narratives and wise sentences and their exact remembrance from generation to generation. In consequence of respect for the memory of ancestors, magians, soothsayers, and wise men, in consequence of faith in their blessings as in the fulfilment of an immutable testament, every word and every phrase were transmitted in an unchanged form from mouth to mouth as something inviolably sacred. If by the national saying of the Slavonians, 'A word cannot be thrown out of a song,' if proverbs and bywords remain unaltered in their form for centuries, notwithstanding their frequently civil character, much less could there be any alteration in the divinely inspired covenants of the patriarchs or the wise sentences of the magians, regarded by the ancients as mysteriously enlightened. The immutability of certain remarkable expressions in the Egyptian and Assyrian literatures explain this fact and place it beyond doubt. It has been shown by the reading of the Assyrian inscriptions that expressions which were formerly supposed to belong exclusively to the Bible, such as, '*To the right hand and to the left*' (Gen. xiii. 9); '*Numberless as the stars of heaven*' (Gen. xv. 5; cf. xxii. 17); '*In the last days*' (Gen. xlix. 1); '*The heart is hardened*' (Exod. vii. 13), were also generally used by the Assyrians in remote antiquity. On the other hand, the phraseology of the triumphal hymn in honour of Thothmes III.,<sup>1</sup> who reigned in the sixteenth century B.C., has a wonderful likeness of expressions with the holy songs of the prophet Moses (Exod. xv. 1-17; Deut. xxxii. 25-35, 40-42). Owing to these analogies, the similarity of the parables with the blessings of the patriarchs and their wonderfully artistic and poetical form become quite comprehensible as to their origin. The facts communicated of Balaam's history and the thoughts, that is, his parables, were invested by the sacred historian in the usual poetical form of speech of that period, so that some of the expressions of the

<sup>1</sup> Brugsch, *Egypt*, pp. 350-354.

historical part and of the parables proved similar in the choice of expressions to some of the typical blessings of the ancient patriarchs. There is another fact which confirms this assertion, and excludes the suspicion of an imitation; it is the resemblance of some expressions of Balaam's parables to those of the triumphal hymns in honour of some of the Egyptian kings. In those long epic-lyrical descriptions of the exploits of the Pharaohs, phrases which are literally similar to some expressions of Balaam's parables are more than once met with. In the poem of Thothmes III. this king is represented as the personification of whole Egypt, and compared 'to a young ox full of courage, who bends his horn, and whom no one can approach' (Brugsch, *Egypt*, p. 352; cf. Num. xxiii. 22), or a lion with a terrible look (Num. xxiii. 24). The Assyrian monuments testify the same from another side. 'The gods bless the intentions of the king,' 'going before him,' 'filling his enemies with terror' (cf. Num. xxiv. 8), 'trample upon the hostile divinities.'<sup>1</sup>

In spite of all this, the question has been raised as to the origin of the artistic colouring of Balaam's parables, and as to whether historical reality has not here been sacrificed to art? Does not the number seven of the parables give reason to doubt the reality and to search for a symbolical idea as the basis of all these parables? Have not one or two, or perhaps even three of the parables, been imagined by the author himself on account of the number seven?

But such suppositions would be highly improbable in view of all the arguments which have been set forth. It has been clearly demonstrated by the pragmatistical exposition of the narrative, and a multitude of proofs of its authenticity, that every word, every line, every fact and slightest detail, bear the indelible stamp of historical reality; therefore we must find another clue to the number seven. In this case the reason of this number of parables does not lie with Moses, but with Balaam, with his Semitic process of thought; and by viewing the question in this light the matter becomes clear. We must examine the problem from the point of view of the form in which Divine revelation was transmitted to mankind through the prophets; this was done according to the laws of accommodation (that is, adaptation to human compre-

<sup>1</sup> See Astafiev, *Antiquities*, p. 89.

hension) and symbolism (or typicalness). According to the law of accommodation, and for the sake of expediency, the Divine inspiration manifested itself in forms natural and comprehensible to the Semites, and in general even to illiterate persons.

The second law required that revelation should be fully and completely expressed; in other words, that it should bear in its outward form the seal of Divinity in accordance with the ideas of that time. And as even the sentences of the magians and soothsayers were expressed in the form of poetry, the result of their natural state of excitation; as both Moses and Balaam were endowed with great poetical gifts, and were accustomed to pour forth their thoughts in such a manner; and as, further, from the point of view of monotheism, it was required that every matter, in order to be full and complete, should be determined by the number seven (cf. Amos i. 9, 11, 13), therefore the Lord by His Spirit, as a sign of the fulness and perfection of His holy decrees, declared through Balaam the future destinies of the chosen people and their enemies, in a poetical form, by seven parables, representing in general features those destinies by means of events and persons actually belonging to history in the time of Moses.

Therefore, as the latest suppositions of Protestant theologians, referring the narrative of chapters xxii.-xxiv. of the Book of Numbers to a later historical period, are proved to be groundless, the former universal belief of the Church as to the more ancient origin of these chapters, namely, in ascribing them to a period antecedent to that of the kings, soon after the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, and actually during the historical era of Moses, is fully justified.

THE END





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